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ANNOTATIONS  
ON THE  
GENERAL EPISTLES  
OF  
JAMES, PETER, JOHN, AND JUDE

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# INTRODUCTION

TO THE

## GENERAL EPISTLES.

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I. *The Term "Catholic" or "General" Epistles.* The seven Epistles which bear the names of James, Peter, John, and Jude have been known collectively in the Church since the fourth century as the Catholic or General Epistles, but the meaning of this term has been a question of much dispute.<sup>1</sup> It is best to use the word *Catholic* or *General* as meaning *universal*, addressed to the Church in general, although this accurately only applies in the case of 1 John, 2 Peter, and Jude, and is altogether inappropriate to 2 and 3 John, which are addressed to individuals. It is easy to understand how, at an early time, these two letters of John were placed by the side of his first Epistle, and then these seven Epistles regarded as one collection, and appended to the Acts of the Apostles, where they are found in all the early MSS., and to which position they have been restored in all critical editions of the Greek text.

<sup>1</sup> The word *Catholic* in this connection has been used in a threefold sense,—(1) in the sense of *circular* or *encyclical*, addressed to Christians in general; (2) as synonymous with *canonical*; (3) in the sense of *orthodoxy* as opposed to *heretical*.

2. *The Canonicity of the General Epistles.* During the first period of the history of the Canon (70–170 A. D.), 2 Peter is the only book of the N. T. which is not referred to as an apostolic and authoritative writing. During the second period (170–303 A. D.) all the General Epistles were known, but the Epistles of James and Jude were little used, and 2 Peter was barely known. This evidence, however, is of use, and not of doubt or inquiry, for the Canon was fixed in ordinary practice, and doubts were settled by custom and not by criticism. During the third period (303–397 A. D.) the Canon was authoritatively established. Eusebius of Cæsarea (about 325 A. D.), the historian of the early Church, speaks of “seven Catholic Epistles,” and in a famous passage (*H. E.* III. 25) sums up the results of his inquiry into the evidence for the canonicity and apostolicity of the N. T. books furnished by the writings of the first three centuries. He places 1 John and 1 Peter among the books *universally acknowledged*, and the Epistles of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, among the *disputed books*. He does not say that these last five were universally regarded with suspicion, but that they were not universally accepted by all as canonical. By Eusebius himself all the General Epistles were regarded as canonical. He is simply narrating what has been the case in the past, and it is clear that the doubts to which Eusebius refers were ceasing to exist. The Church held that a book to be canonical must have been written by an Apostle, or at least have Apostolic sanction. But as James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, did not claim to be written by Apostles, the question of their Apostolicity and authority arose. With regard to 2 Peter the question was more with reference to its genuineness and authenticity.

3. *The Order of the Seven General Epistles.* The order

of the General Epistles as given in our English Bible is the one usually observed in the principal manuscripts, versions, and catalogues of the books of the N. T. The books are so arranged in the catalogues of Athanasius, of Cyril of Jerusalem, of the Council of Laodicea, of Jerome, of Epiphanius, of Gregory Nazianzen, of John of Damascus, and others.<sup>1</sup> Other arrangements, however, also occur. The arrangement in Luther's German Bible is peculiar, and is found in no other catalogue or version, ancient or modern. The order is 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Hebrews, James, Jude, Revelation. This arrangement seems to have arisen from the peculiar views of Luther, who placed those books, about which he had some doubt, at the end of the New Testament.

4. *The Importance of the General Epistles.* In recent times great stress has been laid on the importance of the General Epistles, especially in their relation to Biblical Theology. We have no right to draw a distinction between the canonical books of the N. T., placing some in the first and others in the second rank, as has been done in time past by some writers. A book either belongs to the Canon or it does not. If the external and internal evidence warrants us in accepting a book as a part of the inspired Word of God, then it no longer occupies a second place, for we must lay just as much stress upon its teachings as upon that of any other book.

5. *Select Literature Covering the General Epistles.*

(1) Commentaries on the Greek Text.

Alford, *The Greek Testament*, etc., 4 vols., 1880.

Bengel, *Gnomon*, 3 vols., 1894.

<sup>1</sup> The original texts can be found in Westcott, *Canon of the N. T.*, pp. 539-584, fifth ed., 1881.

- Lange, *Commentary on the General Epistles*, 1868:  
 Lange, Van Oosterzee, and Mombert, on *James*; Fronmüller and Mombert, on *Epistles of Peter*; Braune and Mombert, on *Epistles of John*; Fronmüller and Mombert, on *Jude*.  
 Meyer, *The General Epistles*, 1887; originally prepared by Huther; edited by Dwight.  
 Webster and Wilkinson, *The Greek Testament*, 2 vols., 1855, 1861.  
 Weiss, *Die Katholischen Briefe*, etc., Leipzig, 1892.  
 Wordsworth, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, 2 vols., 1877.

(2) Commentaries on the English Text.

- Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*: Plumptre, on *James*, 1890; Plumptre, on *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 1879; Plummer, on *Epistles of John*, 1889.  
*Ellicott, New Testament for English Readers*: Punchard, on *James*; Mason, on *1 Peter*; Plummer, on *2 Peter*; Sinclair, on *Epistles of John*; Plummer, on *Jude*.  
*Expositor's Bible*: Plummer, on *James and Jude*; Lumby, on *Epistles of Peter*; Alexander, on *Epistles of John*.  
 Sadler, *The General Epistles*, London, 1895.  
 Schaff, *Popular Commentary*: Gloag, on *James*; Salmon, on *Epistles of Peter*; Pope and Moulton, on *Epistles of John*; Angus, on *Jude*.  
*Speaker's Commentary*: Scott, on *James*; Cook, on *1 Peter*; Lumby, on *2 Peter*; Alexander, on *Epistles of John*; Lumby, on *Jude*.

# SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

TO THE

## GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

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1. *The Author of the Epistle.* The writer of the Epistle describes himself as "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (i. 1). There are at least three persons by the name of James<sup>1</sup> mentioned in the New Testament:—(1) James, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, one of the twelve, who suffered martyrdom 44 A. D. (Acts xii. 1, 2); (2) James, the son of Alphæus, also one of the twelve, who was also known by the name of James "the little" (Mark xv. 40); and (3) James, the Lord's brother (Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiii. 55; Gal. i. 19), not one of the twelve (John vii. 5), to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7), and who occupied such a prominent position in the church at Jerusalem during the lifetime of Peter and Paul (Acts xii. 17; xv. 13, 19; Gal. ii. 9; Acts xxi. 18).

There are very few who ever have held that James, the son of Zebedee, was the author of this Epistle.<sup>2</sup> There

<sup>1</sup> James is the same as Jacob, a favorite name among the Jews. The English form of the name comes through the French. In the German and Scandinavian languages the name has retained its original form of Jacob or Jacobus.

<sup>2</sup> Basset in his *Catholic Epistle of St. James* (1876), pp. i-xxxvi, however, seriously advocates the theory.



are many, however, who maintain that the last two, James, the son of Alphæus, and James, the Lord's brother, are identical, holding that the latter was a *cousin* of our Lord, instead of a brother. But such a view though supported by great scholars is altogether untenable. Even of those who think that they are different persons, there are some like Stier, Wieseler, and others, who suppose that James the Apostle, the son of Alphæus, wrote this letter, identifying him with the James so prominently mentioned in Acts, maintaining that it was this James who was at the head of the church in Jerusalem. But the reasons given are very insufficient. There can be but one answer to this problem. It was James, the Lord's brother, who was not one of the twelve, who wrote this Epistle. He became a believer after Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7), and it is he who stands out so prominently in the Acts, who became, on account of his relationship to the Lord and his high personal character, one of the most eminent leaders of the primitive Church, who presided at the Council of Jerusalem, who was regarded by Paul as one of the pillars of the Church (Gal. ii. 9), and who was known in the Early Church as "James the Just," "the Bishop of Jerusalem." This has been the almost universal opinion of all ages.

2. *The Relationship of James, the Brother of our Lord, to Jesus.* There are three theories held concerning the brethren of our Lord.

(1) These brethren were really the first *cousins* of Jesus, the sons of Alphæus and of Mary, the sister of the Virgin Mary. The advocates of this theory thus identify James, the Lord's brother, with James, the son of Alphæus, making him one of the twelve. This is known as the *cousin* theory, or, as Jerome first broached it, the Hieronymian theory. It is the least tenable of all

three, and has neither any scriptural nor any traditional support.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has no scriptural foundation whatever. (1) The word *brother* or *sister* nowhere is used in the N. T. for *cousin*; (2) the natural meaning of Matt. xiii. 55, 56; Mark vi. 3, cannot be explained away; (3) the brethren of Jesus are always distinguished from the disciples of Jesus (John ii. 2; Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 21, 31; Luke viii. 19; John vii. 3); (4) James, the son of Alphæus, is never reckoned as a brother of Jesus; (5) James, the son of Alphæus, was one of the twelve, but the brethren of the Lord did not believe on him before His resurrection (John vii. 5); (6) Mary, the wife of Clopas (John xix. 25), was not the sister of our Lord's mother. It is Salome who is here referred to, and four women are mentioned in this verse; (7) a true exegesis of Gal. i. 19 and 1. Cor. xv. 7 does not warrant us in affirming that James, the Lord's brother, was one of the twelve. The reasons adduced for this identity are altogether too subjective to be considered as of any importance.

The fullest discussion of this whole subject is found in Lightfoot, *Commentary on Galatians*, pp. 88-127 (Amer. ed., 1870), and in Major, *The Epistle of James*, pp. viii-xlvi (London, 1892). This *cousin* theory was first put forward by Jerome about 383 A. D., against Helvidius, with the professed aim of establishing the virginity of both Mary and Joseph. Augustine finally adopted this *cousin* theory, and through him it became the established theory of the Latin Church, was embodied in the services of Western Christianity, and is now the prevalent view of the Roman Church, which in her Calendar recognizes only two saints by the name of James,—and in this respect has naturally been followed by the Lutheran Church and by the Church of England, who both set aside May 1st to St. Philip and St. James, the son of Alphæus, and July 25th to St. James, the son of Zebedee.

Major (p. xviii) has an interesting mathematical estimate of the chances in favor of the several suppositions involved in this *cousin* theory. He is willing to rest the case on the four following points:

(1) for the use of *brother* for cousin in the phrase, "the Lord's brother"—one out of five ( $\frac{1}{5}$ ), making 4 to 1 *against* it;

(2) for the brethren of the Lord being included in the twelve—one out of ten ( $\frac{1}{10}$ ), making 9 to 1 *against* it;

(3) for the supposed sons of Alphæus=Clopas being always found in company—*not* with their own mother, who was certainly still living,—but with their aunt, residing with her and her Son, and taking on themselves to control the actions of the latter—one out of ten ( $\frac{1}{10}$ ), making 9 to 1 *against* it;

(4) for two sisters having the same name—one out of ten ( $\frac{1}{10}$ ), making 9 to 1 *against* it;

(5) the probability in favor of the *simultaneous realization* of the four

(2) The second theory is that the brethren and sisters of Jesus are the children of Joseph by a *former* marriage, and had really no blood relationship with Christ. This view is known as the *half-brother theory*, or, since it was so zealously advocated by Epiphanius about 367 A. D., as the *Epiphanian theory*. But this theory can only be regarded as a compromise. It is destitute of all positive arguments in its favor. There is not the slightest indication in the Gospels that Joseph, previous to his marriage with the Virgin Mary, was a widower. Nor is this the only view known in the Early Church, and, as Schaff has shown, this theory is not free from suspicion of an ascetic bias, as being the first step towards the dogma of the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord. This theory is also exposed to the fatal objection, that if Joseph had *elder* children, then *the Lord Jesus Himself would not be Joseph's heir*; the *eldest* son, unless deprived, would have been entitled to the throne of David. But Jesus is always regarded as the legal heir of the throne of David (Matt. i. 16; Luke i. 27; Rom. i. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8; Rev. xxii. 16). This last objection admits of no satisfactory answer, and utterly and finally disproves the *half-brother theory*.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The last theory is, that the brethren of our Lord are

above stated hypotheses is  $\frac{1}{5 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10} = \frac{1}{5000}$  making 4999 probabilities to 1 *against* the truth of the *cousin theory*.

Among those who have embraced this view we may name in addition to Jerome, Augustine, and Roman Catholic Commentators in general, such Protestant scholars as Calvin, Calovius, Buddeus, Pearson, Gieseler, Theile, Baumgarten, Guericke, Hengstenberg, Keil, Philippi, Ellicott, Wordsworth, Tregelles, Faussett, and Lange.

<sup>1</sup> This *half-brother theory* assumes that Joseph was an old man when he espoused the Virgin Mary, having at least four sons and two daughters, by his former wife, still living. Though there is nothing in the N. T. to prove such a theory, it has a strong traditional support in the Apocryphal Gospels (especially the Gospel of Peter and the Protevangelium of James),

the sons of Joseph and Mary, and therefore the younger brethren of Jesus. This gives to the word *brother* its natural meaning and this view is known as the *brother* theory, or, because it was strongly advocated by Helvidius, a Roman Christian, about 380 A. D., has been styled the *Helvidian* theory. This interpretation is exegetically the most natural, and is upheld by the obvious meaning of Matt. i. 18, 25; Luke ii. 7. All the objections that have been raised against this theory have no foundation either in Scripture or in early tradition, and we cannot arrive at any other conclusion but that James was a son of Mary and Joseph. (See *Excursus* I., at end of this Epistle.)

3. *A Brief Life of the Author of the Epistle.* Of the early life of James, the oldest of the four younger brethren of our Lord (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3) nothing whatever is known, for we cannot accept any of the legends of the Apocryphal Gospels. His training must have been the same as that of Jesus, and he grew up to manhood in that humble home of Nazareth. Before Christ's resurrection James did not believe on Him (John vii. 5), and we can only surmise that he took a somewhat prominent part as the oldest of the brothers in trying to restrain Jesus when they thought He was beside Himself (Mark iii. 21), and he may have uttered the taunting words recorded by John (vii. 3, 4). We hear nothing defi-

and is upheld by the ecclesiastical authority of the Eastern Church. It is the favorite theory of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nyssa, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria; it may in fact be regarded as the generally received opinion of the Greek Church, being embodied in the Greek, Syrian, and Coptic services,—Oct. 9th being dedicated to James, the son of Alphæus, and Oct. 23d to James, the brother of the Lord. In modern times this view has been maintained by Cave, Bagnage, Thiersch, Renan, Morison, and has recently been advocated in a most scholarly manner by Lightfoot (as already cited), and accepted by Plumptre.

nite concerning James until after the resurrection. St. Paul tells us that the risen Lord appeared to James (1 Cor. xv. 7), and this seems to have brought about his conversion as well as those of his brethren, for immediately afterwards we find them in the company of the Apostles and other believers (Acts i. 13, 14). He seems to have been present at the election of Matthias (Acts i. 14-26), and evidently was a sharer in the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1-21). From this time onward, on account of his high moral character and probably also on account of his relationship to Jesus, James occupied the most distinguished position in the Christian Church, although we find no mention of him for about ten years.

Paul, on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts ix. 27), speaks of James in such a connection (Gal. i. 18, 19) as to show his prominence, and he seems from this time on to have presided over the church at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17; xv. 13, 19; Gal. ii. 9, 12; Acts xxi. 18, 19). Probably the last reference to James in the N. T. is found in Heb. xiii. 7. Entirely in accordance with these notices of Scripture is the universal testimony of the Early Church to the high official dignity held by James, the Lord's brother in the church at Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Both Hegesippus and Josephus (*Ant.* XX. 91) give an account of his martyrdom, and it may be regarded as an established fact that James was killed by the fanatical Jews at the temple, shortly before the siege of Jerusalem, about 62 A. D.

4. *The Genuineness of the Epistle.* During the first three centuries considerable uncertainty prevailed regarding the identity of James, whether he was one of the twelve or not, and so some questioned the genuineness of

<sup>1</sup> A long and interesting account of the life and death of James, written by Hegesippus, about 160 A. D., is preserved by Eusebius (*H. E.* II. 23).

this Epistle, and consequently its authenticity and authority. This uncertainty about the authorship was still further increased by the fact that it remained for a long time in the possession of exclusively Jewish-Christian circles, that its contents seemed to conflict with the views of Paul concerning Justification by faith, and that so little reference was made to the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Eusebius classes it among the *Antilegomena* or disputed writings of the N. T. ; but he himself did not share in these doubts, for he expressly quotes the Epistle of James as Scriptures.

We have two kinds of testimony at our command to prove that the Epistle is genuine, really written by James, the Lord's brother, Bishop of Jerusalem.

(1) Internal Evidence. (a) The Epistle shows that the James who wrote it is no other than the James of Jerusalem, who is so prominent in Acts xii. 17 ; xv. 13, 19 ; xxi. 18, 19. He was so well known and so pre-eminent that the writer's simple designation of himself as James, "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," was sufficient for his readers. (b) That the writer could reprove and warn the believing Jews of the Dispersion in such earnest words, is also a proof that this James was held in the highest esteem (Gal. ii. 9, 12), and that he was no other than James the Just. (c) The whole doctrinal peculiarity of the Epistle is entirely in keeping with the portrait of James as given in the Acts and in the Epistles of Paul, and of James the Just or the Righteous, as depicted by Josephus, and so fully described by Hegesippus in Eusebius. (d) The writer was a Jew (ii. 21), writing to his Christian countrymen (i. 2 ; ii. 7 ; etc.), whom commercial enterprises (iv. 13) or persecution (i. 1) had scattered over Syria and Asia Minor, and evidently one who, if he had not been a personal follower

of our Lord, had often heard Him speak. This internal evidence is of the strongest kind. As we study this Epistle we are persuaded that the author is James, the Lord's brother. The simple designation of the writer in the first verse is a proof of the genuineness of the Epistle. A forger would have added some other description as "James, the Lord's brother," or "James, the Bishop of Jerusalem."

(2) External evidence. Although Origen (*died* 254 A. D.) is apparently the first who cites the Epistle as Scripture and as written by James, the external evidence in its favor is very strong. (a) Direct Evidence. We have satisfactory evidence that the Syrian Church, even before 150 A. D., accepted both the genuineness and the authenticity of this Epistle, as well as its canonicity, for it is found in the Peshito, the Old Syrian Version, which was regarded as authoritative by all the Syrian churches, and used in all their public services. They were best able to judge of the character of this Epistle, for they knew all the circumstances connected with its origin, for it is almost positively certain that James wrote this letter to the Christian Jews scattered in Syria. After the time of Origen (254 A. D.), and of Eusebius, writing about 314 A. D., the letter is universally acknowledged as belonging to the Scripture Canon. It is included in all the catalogues of the Bible which have come down to us from the churches of Egypt and Asia Minor, and the reason why its canonicity was for a long time questioned by the Western Church, though the Epistle was well known, lay in the fact that it did not profess to be written by an Apostle, that it was not addressed to Gentile churches, and that it seemed to contradict the teaching of Paul. (b) Indirect Evidence. The indirect evidence consists in the quotations and allusions found in the

writtings of the Early Church Fathers, and is of the greatest importance, showing that our Epistle was more widely known during the first three centuries than has been commonly supposed. Major calls attention to the remarkable fact that our earliest witnesses in favor of the Epistle belong to the church which was one of the latest to recognize the Epistle as canonical, viz., the church at Rome.<sup>1</sup> In proportion as the Gentile element in the church at Rome increased, the Judaistic Epistle fell into the background. Clement of Rome, in his *Epistle to the Corinthians*, written about 95 A. D., shows that he was acquainted with the Epistle of James, not only in that there are several unmistakable references, but especially in this that there are several attempts made by him to reconcile and combine the teaching of James and Paul concerning Justification.<sup>2</sup> We need not lay stress upon the close resemblance of expression or allusions found in the "Teaching of the Twelve," in the Epistle of Barnabas (written at least before 100 A. D.), and in the book known as the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,"<sup>3</sup> because we know for certain that Hermas (110 A. D.), a contemporary of Clement of Rome, used this Epistle. The very topics dwelt on by James are those to which Hermas most frequently recurs.<sup>4</sup> We have also the testimony of

<sup>1</sup> Zahn explains this from the strong Jewish character of the church at Rome during the first century of its existence (*Gesch. des N. T. Kanons*, I. p. 963).

<sup>2</sup> So Lightfoot and Major. The latter (pp. li, lii) gives the fullest list of striking parallels ever published.

<sup>3</sup> Written evidently by a Jewish Christian, about the beginning of the second century. Lightfoot thinks that the writer's language is formed on the model of the Epistle of James (*Galatians*, note p., 158). Major gives us almost three pages of citations from the original Greek text to illustrate the writer's dependence upon the Epistle of James.

<sup>4</sup> Salmon (*Introd.* p. 450) brings out this very strikingly. Major devotes nearly four pages to quotations from the original Greek of Hermas illustrating the importance of Hermas as a witness.



Justin Martyr (*died* 165 A. D.), of the Epistle of Diognetus (written about 150 A. D.), of Irenæus (*d.* 202), of Clement of Alexandria (*d.* 220), of Origen (*d.* 254), of the Clementine Homilies (early in the third century), of the Apostolical Constitutions,<sup>1</sup> of Lactantius (about 300 A. D.), of Athanasius (*d.* 373), of Chrysostom, and lastly of Didymus (*d.* 374), who was the teacher of Jerome and Rufinus, and who left a brief commentary on all the Catholic Epistles.<sup>2</sup> There can be no question, therefore, as to the genuineness, authenticity, or canonicity of the Epistle of James. This is now settled and fully established. We cannot, however, close this discussion without referring to the unfavorable opinion which Luther always held with reference to this Epistle. His objections were not critical, for he even starts from the erroneous idea, that the letter professed to be written by James, the son of Zebedee. His arguments are altogether subjective and rest on a theory which makes private feeling and personal experience the supreme authority as to the doctrine and source of doctrine. Although the same position was taken by the Magdeburg Centuriators, by Hunnius, and a few others, the great theologians of the Lutheran Church have not accepted this opinion of Luther, although in modern times Ströbel attempted to revive it. (See *Excursus* II.)

5. *The Relation of the Epistle of James to the Old Testament.* Many commentators have called our attention to the frequency of the parallels between the language of this Epistle and that of the O. T., especially of the Wisdom literature, including Ecclesiasticus and the Book of

<sup>1</sup> Compiled in the fourth century, but incorporating materials of a much earlier date.

<sup>2</sup> Major gives all references in full, quoting the most important passages in the original.

Wisdom.<sup>1</sup> This Epistle has even been described as the Christian Book of Proverbs. The proverbial character of the Epistle and its peculiar feature of O. T. piety are only additional proofs of the genuineness of the book.

6. *The Relation of the Epistle of James to the other Books of the New Testament.* A careful reading of the Epistle, with this special object in view, shows that the writer was unquestionably one who had known the Lord and was familiar with His oral teaching. The remarkable coincidences between the Epistle and the Sermon on the Mount and certain passages in the Synoptists arise from the fact that both James and the Synoptists were familiar with the Oral Gospel, for it is almost positively certain that James wrote his Epistle before ever the Gospels were composed.

It has been the general belief in the Church, since the time of Augustine, that there is a connection between the Epistle of James and the writings of Paul, and this has been usually explained on the supposition that James meant to controvert Paul's teaching on Justification. But, as has been pointed out by the most careful students of this Epistle, the argument of James with reference to faith and works has no bearing on Paul's doctrine; and if one of these writers wrote with reference to the other, it is far more probable that Paul was acquainted with the Epistle of James than James with the Epistles of Paul.

So, likewise, the treatment of the subject of faith in *The Epistle to the Hebrews* is such as to suggest that the writer was acquainted with both the Epistle of James and that to the Romans. In Heb. xi., faith is exhibited not as in rivalry with works but as the cause and ground

<sup>1</sup> In many cases the dependence of the Greek of James on the Greek Bible (Septuagint) is very striking. A good reference Bible will supply the most important parallel passages.

of all the noble deeds of the Old Testament saints. In Hebrews, too, the evils of the Jewish Church are more developed, and the threatened judgments more imminent, than when James wrote, and no doubt Heb. xiii. 17 contains an allusion to the martyrdom of James himself.

There are also many resemblances between this Epistle of James and 1 Peter. Everything goes to prove the priority of our Epistle to that of Peter. In almost every case the common thought finds fuller expression in Peter, and we find that in the quotations from the O. T., which are common to James and Peter, the inexact references of the former are corrected and supplemented by the latter. Peter, evidently, was familiar with the Epistle of James and made use of it.

7. *The Language and Style of the Epistle.* A few scholars have sought to establish an Aramaic original, because they think that James could not have written such good Greek. The purity of the Greek idiom has also been made a ground for doubting the genuineness of the Epistle, for there can scarcely be any question that the Greek of this Epistle approaches more nearly to the standard of classical Greek than any other book of the N. T., with the exception, perhaps, of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Hebrews. A careful study of the Greek text shows, however, that it is written in Greek by a Greek-speaking Jew.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason why James should not be able to write such idiomatic Greek. The Greek language was certainly known and spoken in Palestine and Syria, and Galilee

<sup>1</sup> Major on *James*, p. ccvii. "It is written in strong, simple Greek, used with no slight rhetorical skill by one who has something of his own to say, and says it with perfect freedom. If a translation, it is a translation of the stamp of our authorized English Version, or of Luther's German Version, which have become the recognized standards and models of excellence in their respective languages."

was studded with Greek towns, and the neighboring town of Gadara was celebrated as an important seat of learning and literature. James evidently continually read the Greek Bible, for he quotes the O. T. according to the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew.

The style of the Epistle is remarkable for its rhetoric and rhythm. The sentences are short, simple, direct, conveying weighty thoughts in weighty words, and giving the impression of a strong and serious individuality, as well as of a poetic imagination.<sup>1</sup>

8. *The Persons Addressed.* James writes this letter "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," but this inscription, plain and simple as it is, has been variously interpreted.

(1) Some suppose that the Epistle was addressed to Christians in general, to all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> They take the expression "twelve tribes" in a figurative sense to denote the "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16), in contrast to "Israel after the flesh" (1 Cor. x. 18). But such an opinion is inadmissible and without any support in the Epistle. A literal interpretation of the expression is by far the best. There is no allusion whatever to Gentile converts, and it is highly probable that when this letter was written no Gentile Christian Churches had been regularly formed and fully organized.

(2) Others maintain that the Epistle was addressed to

<sup>1</sup> See Major, p. xciii. James makes no attempt at elaborate periods. There are only two sentences (ii. 2-4; iv. 13-15) in the whole Epistle which exceed four lines, while we find sentences of ten lines in 1 Peter, of twelve in Hebrews, and of twenty in Ephesians. Major has counted 140 simple sentences, having no subordinate finite verb, and he finds 42 sentences with a single subordinate clause. Short as are the sentences, Major claims that they are better formed and more rhythmical than are to be found elsewhere in the N. T. except in 1 Cor. xv.

<sup>2</sup> So De Wette, Hengstenberg, Hofmann, Hilgenfeld, Lücke, Philippi, Lange, and others.

the Jews in general, whether believers or not.<sup>1</sup> But the contents of the Epistle refute this opinion, for the readers, whoever they were, were at least regarded as Christians.

(3) There can be only one true conclusion—the Epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians.<sup>2</sup> It is very clearly evident that the Epistle throughout is addressed to Jews, and that these Jews were Christians who had acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and Christ. They are mixed up, however, with rich Jewish unbelievers, who persecute and oppress them, keeping back the hire of their laborers, slaves of lust and luxury (ii. 6, 7; v. 1–6). The believers themselves are mostly poor (ii. 5), and the faith of many is still weak (i. 6–8, 13; iv. 11; v. 9), they are haughty to the poor, obsequious to the rich (ii. 1–9, 15, 16), and the few rich belonging to the Church (i. 10) are in danger of falling away through covetousness, worldliness, and pride (iv. 3–6, 13–16).

As all the congregations established by Paul, especially after the council of Jerusalem (50 A. D.), were mixed congregations, in which Gentiles, as a rule, largely predominated, we must seek these Jewish Christian churches among those founded before Paul began his missionary labors. That there were many such congregations we learn from Acts ii. 9–11; iv. 36; ix. 2, 10, 14, 19, 25; xi. 19, 20, and this is confirmed by the statement made by James in 58 A. D. as recorded in Acts xxi. 20. Among the three chief divisions of the *Diaspora* then recognized, the Babylonian, the Syrian, and the Egyptian, we must look for these churches where the Greek language was

<sup>1</sup> So Grotius, Theile, Credner, Hug, Wordsworth, Bassett, and others.

<sup>2</sup> So Beyschlag, Bleek, Huther, Wiesinger, Schaff, Lechler, Mangold, Weiss, Davidson, Alford, Salmon, Gloag, Plummer, and the majority of modern critics.

most commonly used, among the Greek Jews or Hellenists scattered in the Syrian Dispersion, in the countries lying nearest to Judea, in Phœnicia, Syria, and Proconsular Asia. For all the evidence seems to point to the Syrian Diaspora as the location of these Jewish-Christian congregations.

9. *The Date of the Epistle.* With reference to the date of the Epistle we need refer but to two views. There are some who maintain that this Epistle shows an intimate acquaintance with the writings of Paul, especially of his controversial Epistles (Gal., 1 and 2 Cor., Romans), and that therefore this Epistle must have been written after the year A. D. 58.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, we have the strongest evidence to prove that this Epistle was written before A. D. 50, and that it is the oldest of all the N. T. writings.<sup>2</sup> We may give the following reasons for an early date: (1) It was written to churches composed exclusively of Jewish Christians. It was not until A. D. 44 that any number of Gentiles were admitted into the Church (Acts xi. 20, 21). The letter must have been written shortly after this time. (2) There is no allusion whatever to the great controversy concerning circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic law. This proves that this question had not yet arisen.<sup>3</sup> (3) The

<sup>1</sup> So Hug, De Wette, Credner, Bleek, Ewald, Lange, Guericke, Wiesinger, Reuss, Farrar, Wordsworth, and others.

<sup>2</sup> An early date is assigned to this Epistle by Theile, Neander, Thiersch, Schneckenburger, Hofmann, Erdmann, Huther, Beyschlag, Schaff, Stanley, Mangold, Weiss, Nösselt, Lechler, Alford, Plumptre, Eadie, Lumby, Salmon, Gloag, Major, and others.

<sup>3</sup> If the letter had been written after the Council of Jerusalem (A. D. 50), James would most assuredly have referred to the decree, and urged the Jews of the Dispersion to observe the conditions laid down, for the points at issue in the controversy were of such a burning character that James, on a later visit of Paul to Jerusalem in 58 A. D., called his attention to the matter (Acts xxi. 20-25), and the furious assault of the Jews on Paul turned on this very question (Acts xxi. 27-29).

Judaic tone of the Epistle (so strongly emphasized by Luther) is in favor of an early date. So far as this consideration goes, we should be led to assign the Epistle to the earliest possible date after the day of Pentecost. (4) The description given of church organization and church discipline implies an early date of the Epistle. No mention is made of bishops, but only of teachers and elders (iii. 1; v. 14), which were also recognized in the Synagogue. The congregation or church (v. 14) probably still worshipped in the synagogue (ii. 2), for we know from the Acts that the Christian Jew frequented the Temple and Synagogue worship and for a long time observed the Jewish ritual.

We conclude then with Gloag that we have in this Epistle of James "an inspired document of primitive Christianity, allied to the simple teaching of the Master, —before the religion of Christ was developed by the doctrinal statements of Paul and the profound intuitions of John."<sup>1</sup>

All are agreed that the place where James, the Lord's brother, wrote this Epistle was Jerusalem. Commentators love to trace the local coloring of the Epistle, for

<sup>1</sup> I have purposely not used as an argument, in favor of an early date, the relation which James bears to the other writings of the N. T. Major, who has made a most minute comparison of this Epistle with all the N. T. writings, has shown very clearly that James has not used the other Epistles or known of them, but that these writings show traces of our Epistle, and he adds (p. cxxv): "After having given many years' study to this subject, I am convinced that the more closely it is examined, the more will this hypothesis of the priority of our Epistle be found to meet all difficulties, and explain all the facts of the case." I have also not deemed it necessary, in view of the presentation of the evidence for the genuineness of the Epistle already given, to state and refute the theories of the negative German school of critics represented by Pfeiderer, Von Soden, Schwegler Holtzmann, and others, who hold that the larger part of the N. T., including the Epistle of James, is a forgery, belonging either to the close of the first or to the middle of the second century.

all the physical notices and illustrations correspond to the environment of the author.

10. *The Aim of the Epistle.* The whole character of the Epistle is purely practical. James is writing in the interest of morality, and his warnings are directed not so much against errors of doctrine as against errors of life. There is no polemical design in it, for there is no direct or indirect reference to the teaching of Paul. The Epistle is pre-eminently ethical and practical.

11. *The Contents of the Epistle.* The contents of an Epistle can best be ascertained by a careful analysis. On account of the proverbial character of this Epistle it is not easy, however, to trace a connected train of thought.

I. James i. 1-18. *Of Trial.*

1. Address and Greeting (i. 1).
2. Endure Trials with Patience (i. 2-4).
3. Believing Prayer gains Wisdom (i. 5-8).
4. The Perishableness of Riches (i. 9-11).
5. The Reward of the Endurance of Trial (i. 12).
6. The Development of Sin (i. 13-15).
7. The Perfect Gift of God (i. 16-18).

II. James i. 19-27. *Of True Religion.*

8. The Evil Results of Wrath (i. 19-21).
9. Be ye Doers of the Word (i. 22-25).
10. The Essence of True Religion (i. 26-27).

III. James ii. 1-13. *Of Respect of Persons.*

11. Warning against Respect of Persons (ii. 1-4).
12. Fulfil the Royal Law (ii. 5-9).
13. Live by the Law of Liberty (ii. 10-13).

IV. James ii. 14-26. *Judgment shall be according to Works.*

14. God will Render to every Man According to his Works (ii. 14-26).



V. James iii. 1-18. *The Marks of True Wisdom.*

15. Warnings against the Sins of the Tongue (iii. 1-12).

16. True and False Wisdom Contrasted (iii. 13-18).

VI. James iv. 1-17. *Of Worldliness.*

17. Worldliness the Cause of Strife (iv. 1-3).

18. The Unfaithful Reproved (iv. 4-10).

19. Evil Speaking (iv. 11, 12).

20. The Uncertainty of Life (iv. 13-17).

VII. James v. 1-20. *Denunciations and Exhortations.*

21. Warnings to the Rich Jews (v. 1-6).

22. Encouragements to Patience in Suffering (v. 7-11).

23. Warning against Swearing (v. 12).

24. General Exhortations (v. 13-18).

25. Be Active in Saving Souls (v. 19, 20).

12. *Select Literature.* In addition to the Literature given on the General Epistles (pp. vii, viii) we would call attention to the following:

Bassett, *Catholic Epistle of St. James*, 1876.

Beyschlag, *Brief Jacobus*, pp. 239, 1888, being the fifth edition of Huther's Commentary.

Johnstone, *Lectures Exegetical and Practical*; (2d ed), 1889.

Major, *The Epistle of St. James*, London, 1892.

Spitta, *Der Brief des Jacobus*, 1896.

The three best Commentaries on the Greek text of the Epistle of James are those by Major (\$4.00), Beyschlag-Huther in Meyer, and Wordsworth; the three best on the English text are by Plumptre, Scott, and Plummer.

13. *The Jacobean and Pauline Views of Justification Reconciled.* James explicitly says: "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (ii. 24). Paul just as explicitly says: "We reckon therefore that a

man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. iii. 28; Gal. ii. 16); "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. ii. 8, 9).

(1) Some suppose that there is here a real contradiction, and a sharp antagonism between the doctrinal systems of these two writers,—that Paul teaches the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, and James the Romish doctrine of justification by works. They maintain that James wrote for the express purpose of correcting the Pauline doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

(2) There is a second class of theologians who adopt a middle view, that there is indeed a diversity of doctrine between Paul and James, but that this does not exclude a higher unity.<sup>2</sup>

(3) A third class of theologians affirms that there is really no contradiction between James and Paul, that the difference is mainly one of expression, that one writer supplements the other, and that thus we have a much fuller statement of doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Of these some think that James wrote to correct false inferences drawn from the Pauline; doctrine others maintain that the Epistle was written without any reference, either direct or indirect, to Paul's teaching; while still others maintain that Paul wrote with reference to the presentation of James.

<sup>1</sup> Luther, as is well known, was of the opinion that the doctrine of James was opposed to that of Paul. (See *Excursus II.*) In recent times much stress has been laid on this seeming contradiction by a certain line of critics like De Wette, Baur, Schwegler, Holtzmann, Hilgenfeld, and their school.

<sup>2</sup> So Schmid, Lechler, Woldemar Schmidt, Kern, Weizsäcker, Delitzsch (on Heb. xi. 31), and others.

<sup>3</sup> So in substance Calvin, John Gerhard, Calovius, and in recent times Neander, Thiersch, Hofmann, Wiesinger, Hengstenberg, Lange, Philippi, Bleek, Huther, Beyschlag, Guericke, Schaff, Gloag, Alford, Plumptre, Lightfoot, Scott, Salmon, Farrar, Major, and most modern commentators.

Upon three lines of thought the attempt has been made to reconcile these statements of James and Paul: (a) It has been held that the "works" of which James speaks are different from the "works" of which Paul speaks,—that James speaks of the *works of faith* done in obedience to the moral law, the works of believers in a state of grace, while Paul speaks of the ceremonial *works of the law*, of the works of the unregenerate, of legal works done without faith. It is undoubtedly true that there is such a difference in their use of the term *works*, but this does not solve the difficulty. Paul is very explicit,—works, whether legal or evangelical, have nothing whatever to do with the justification of which he speaks, and *works of faith* do not *precede*, but *follow* justification. Nor does James anywhere say that *by works*, or by *works of faith*, a man is justified, in the sense in which Paul uses the word.<sup>1</sup> (b) It has been maintained that the word "faith" is used in different senses by James and by Paul,—that James in his discussion (ii. 14–26) speaks of a speculative, dead faith, a mere lifeless profession of orthodoxy, consisting of mere intellectual knowledge and mental assent, while Paul speaks of a genuine, true, and active faith. This is the solution given by most modern theologians. All this, in a certain sense, is true, but this does not solve the problem. Many who take this position do not rightly apprehend Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Theophylact, Œcumenius, Bede, among the earlier, and Knapp, Gebser, and others among the modern writers, have tried to solve the problem in this way.

<sup>2</sup> We may take Gloag as a fair representative: "There are two distinct parts in the doctrine of Justification: the one, that a man is justified by faith in the merits of Christ, and the other, that the faith which justifies must be active. Paul dwells chiefly on the first part, and James on the second; so that, instead of a contradiction in their views, there is a development of the truth" (*Introd.* pp. 78, 79). But the statement "the faith which justifies must be active" can in no possible way be made to agree with the

(c) Others take the position that the word "justification" is used in different senses by the two writers,—that James speaks of a justification by works *in the sight of man*, while in a state of justification; Paul, on the other hand, speaks of the act of justification by faith *in the sight of God*.<sup>1</sup> But this interpretation, though it seems to solve the difficulty, is, after all, not satisfactory, for the word "to justify" is never used in this sense. The justification of which James speaks is a justification in the sight of God, as well as the justification of which Paul speaks. We believe a careful and exact exegesis of James ii. 14–26, in connection with its context, will afford a better solution.<sup>2</sup>

The true solution lies in this:

(1) The Epistle was written by James before 50 A. D., at least prior to any book of the N. T., and prior to the writings of Paul.

(2) There is no reference whatever, either directly or indirectly, in the argument of James, to the Pauline argument. The two lines of argument as presented by the two writers, being aimed at totally different errors, neither cross nor touch each other.

(3) In ii. 14–26 James warns those who, having been regenerated and justified (i. 18, 21, 25; ii. 1), are now

Pauline teaching. Every question of works is altogether excluded from the Pauline doctrine of Justification before God. The question with him is not whether faith is *living* or *active*, but whether it is a faith that rightly apprehends and appropriates the merits of Christ Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> So in substance already Calvin, Calovius, John Gerhard, and in recent times, Hofmann, Lange, Philippi, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Hengstenberg rightly maintains that "to justify" has with James and Paul the same meaning, but when he speaks of different stages of Justification, and suggests that Paul speaks of the beginning of Justification, which is by faith only, and James of a more perfect Justification, he is simply adopting the Romish idea of Justification and confounding it with sanctification.

leading a mere lifeless profession of orthodoxy, irrespective of moral conduct, without compassionate love (ii. 8, 16), that such an idle, barren faith (ii. 20) is dead (ii. 26), yes, dead in itself (ii. 17), utterly without avail in the sight of God, *at the time* that men shall be judged by the Gospel, (ii. 12), for then "judgment is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy" (ii. 13). James is but enforcing the same truths, taught so forcibly by Christ Himself, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 20, 21); "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words *thou shalt be justified*, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 36, 37).

(4) James uses the word *justify* in the same sense as Paul, *to declare righteous in the sight of God*, but he is not speaking, as Paul does, of the justification that takes place at the time when by faith we appropriate the merits of Christ, and receive the forgiveness of our sins,—but of that justification of which Christ also speaks in Matt. xii. 37, which takes place in the day of judgment, at the time when the final salvation (ii. 14) shall be awarded to the believer (ii. 12). In one sense this takes place at the particular judgment which overtakes every individual at death; in another sense it occurs at the final judgment at the last day, for this latter is but the grand and final completion of a process begun in the case of each individual here on earth, and definitely determined at the moment of death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the details of exegesis see notes on James ii. 14–26. Huther, Scott, and Major, in general, take the same position. SCOTT: "The subject of St. James is not so much *Justification* (according to scientific theological termin-

# THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

## CHAPTER I.

### I. ADDRESS AND GREETING.

1. James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting,

1. **James.** The writer of the Epistle is James, a younger brother of our Lord, not one of the twelve (John vii. 5), who became a believer after our Lord's resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7; Acts i. 14), and who was at the head of the church at Jerusalem until his martyrdom in 62 A. D. **A servant.** Greek *bondservant*. One bought with a price (1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23), bound for life, who must be continually engaged in the service of his Master. Observe

ology), as it is *Judgment by works*; including, however, in that expression the continuous Judgment which is always accompanying the course of human action,—the current record of the Book out of which mankind will be judged at the last day." HUTHER: "Paul denotes by the word *to justify* that declaration of righteousness or acquittal by God, by which the believer is placed in a new filial relation to God; whilst James means that declaration of righteousness or acquittal by God, by which he who is born again as a child of God receives *the salvation imparted at the Judgment*. Justification (so called by Paul) is conditioned on the part of man only by *faith*; the future *salvation*, however, will only be adjudged to him in whom *faith* has proved itself to be a working principle. Paul also makes the attainment of salvation, or the future inheritance of the Kingdom of God, conditioned on the *works* of the Justified (Rom. viii. 4, 13; xiii. 8–10; 1 Cor. vi. 7–11, 13; Gal. v. 6, 19–21; 2 Cor. v. 10: Gal. v. 25"

the writer's great humility; he might have described himself as "the Lord's brother." **Of God and of the Lord.** The co-ordinate mention of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ implies their co-equal dignity. **Jesus.** The same as *Saviour*, the personal name by which our Lord was known among men (Matt. i. 21, 25). **Christ.** The Greek for *Anointed*, the official designation ascribed to our Lord, the same as the Hebrew *Messiah* (John i. 41). **To the twelve tribes.** The address is general, to the twelve tribes.<sup>1</sup> The letter was addressed to the Jewish believers residing among the dispersed tribes of Israel. (See *Introd.* pp. 13-15.) **Which are of the Dispersion.** At Christ's time "the Dispersion" was a technical term for the Hellenistic and other Jews who were scattered within and beyond the limits of the Roman Empire, outside of Palestine. It is highly probable that James wrote more especially to the Syrian Dispersion. Many of these Christian Jews were scattered abroad by the persecution which arose against the Church at the time of the death of Stephen (Acts viii. 1; xi. 19). **Greeting.** Greek, *wissheth joy*. A Greek form of salutation, found also in the letter of Lysias to Felix (Acts xxiii. 26), and in the Apostolic decree (Acts xv. 23). There is no announcement of *grace* and *peace* (the addition of *mercy* being peculiar to 1 and 2 Timothy), and in this respect this Epistle stands alone.

<sup>1</sup> PLUMPTRE: "The superscription is interesting as showing that the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel, though they had been carried into a more distant exile than Judah and Benjamin, were thought of, not as lost and out of sight, but as still sharing the faith and hope of their fathers. . . . The legend as to the disappearance of the Ten Tribes, which has given rise to so many insane dreams as to their identification with the Red Indians of America, or our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, appears for the first time in the Apocryphal 2 Esdras (xiii. 39-47)."

## 2. ENDURE TRIALS WITH PATIENCE.

2-4. Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations ; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have *its* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

2. **Count it all joy.** That is, entire, pure, unmixed joy (Phil. ii. 29). Every trial should be regarded as a ground for joy, unmixed with sorrow. In the same measure as believers grow in peace they grow also in Christian joy. *Peace* is the inward testimony that we have by faith found grace and salvation in Christ. *Joy* denotes not only that we have found peace, but also that we are living and moving in the new, blessed fulness of life in God. **My brethren.** Also in ii. 1, 14 ; iii. 1, 10, 12 ; v. 12, 19 ; "brethren" alone, in iv. 11 ; v. 7, 9, 10 ; "my beloved brethren," i. 16, 19 ; ii. 5. This address shows fellowship in nationality and of faith with his readers. **When ye fall into manifold temptations.** Or *trials* ; here used of outward trials as in 1 Pet. i. 6, of afflictions of all kinds, including persecutions, oppression, and adversity. The inner trial, or temptation proper, arising from one's own lust, is referred to in i. 13, 14.

3. **Knowing.** A hint that they ought to know. **That the proof of your faith.** The same expression is found in 1 Pet. i. 7. Trial *tests* faith, and the testing of faith produces the grace of endurance. James, just as Paul, regards faith the very foundation of the Christian life (i. 6 ; ii. 1, 5 ; v. 15). Faith is here used subjectively, in the sense of assured confidence in the Gospel, whose contents are Jesus Christ. Faith is the mother of all virtues, the root from which they spring. **Worketh patience.** The *active* grace of endurance, trial patiently undergone, as in Rom. v. 3 ; 2 Thess. i. 4. In 2 Cor. i. 6 ; vi. 4, it



denotes the passive act of endurance. Chrysostom calls patience the queen of virtues, and says it is typified by Rebecca.

4. **And let patience have its perfect work.** Major suggests that the meaning of the original Greek can best be expressed in colloquial English, "Let patience make a complete job of it." Endurance, if it is continued until it attains its end, leads to the perfection of Christian character. The Syro-Phœnician woman (Mark vii. 26) is an illustration of the testing of faith, endured to the end. **That ye may be perfect.** Not in the strict sense, because if so the soul could not improve or make progress. "In many things we all stumble" (iii. 2), though all are exhorted to aim at perfection (Matt. v. 48). The word "perfect" is used in the N. T. of Christians who have attained maturity of character and understanding (Col. i. 28; iv. 12; Phil. iii. 15). **And entire.** Sound, healthful, complete in all parts of the spiritual life. **Lacking in nothing.** A negative explanation, corresponding to the positive *entire*.

### 3. BELIEVING PRAYER GAINS WISDOM.

5-8. But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways.

5. **But if any of you lacketh wisdom.** If you need a higher wisdom to see trial in its true light. As Paul is known as the Apostle of Faith, John the Apostle of Love, Peter the Apostle of Hope, so James is the Apostle of Wisdom. Paul's prayer for wisdom (Eph. i. 17-23) may serve as a divine commentary on this whole passage. **Let him ask of God.** As Solomon did (1 Kings iii. 9-12).

**Who giveth to all liberally.** God giveth simply, frankly, generously. Only here in N. T. **And upbraideth not.** BENDEL: "He gives no repulse; when He gives good things He neither upbraids us with our past folly and unworthiness, nor with future abuse of His goodness." The thought is similar to Matt. xii. 20. **And it shall be given him.** An echo of our Lord's promise (Matt. vii. 7).

6. **But let him ask in faith.** This is a particular statement how prayer must be made. We must pray in the *confident* assurance of being heard (Mark xi. 24). **Nothing doubting.** Doubt of the power of prayer is the first hindrance. In learning to pray aright, watchfulness, sobriety of mind, and confidence in Christ's readiness to answer prayer are of great help. We must also fight against distraction (the opposite of internal collectiveness), dulness, coldness, and dryness. When these hindrances are happily overcome, then begins the main struggle, to sacrifice our own will to God, that God may give us His Holy Spirit. **For he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.** The man who is in doubt, who has no steadfastness, is like the unresting wave of the sea. In Isa. lvii. 20 the sea is used as a type of restlessness. (See also Jude 13.)

7. **For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.** For the Lord will not answer such prayer. Confidence in Jesus as an Intercessor is the key to heaven. Prayer comes ever nearer to its perfection in proportion as it becomes a prayer in the name of Jesus (John xiv. 13, 14; xv. 16; xvi. 23, 24). By *Lord* is meant God, without reference here to any particular Person of the Trinity, as in iv. 10, 15; v. 4, 10, 11.

8. **A doubleminded man.** Only here and iv. 8 in the N. T. Properly a man *having two souls*, as we speak of a double-tongued man. Heras in the *Shepherd* (ix.), a

work written early in the second century, has a whole chapter of comment on this verse. **Unstable.** Unsettled, restless, inconsistent, attempting to serve two masters (Matt. vi. 24), halting between two opinions (1 Kings viii. 21). Only here and iii. 8 in the N. T. **In all his ways.** Being governed by impulse, he is not only unsettled in his thoughts and views, but also inconsistent and unsteady in his actions. No one can rely on him.

#### 4. THE PERISHABLENESS OF RICHES.

9-11. But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate : and the rich, in that he is made low : because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and withereth the grass ; and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth : so also shall the rich man fade away in his goings.

9. **But let the brother of low degree.** That is, a Christian brother who is poor. **Glory in his high estate.** For in the kingdom of God we all are brothers, and there is no respect of persons (ii. 1, 9). The poor in the things of this world attain the heavenly dignity of becoming members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

10. **And the rich, in that he is made low.** Let the rich brother glory in his humiliation, rejoice that he has learnt the emptiness of all worldly distinctions, that he no longer "sets his hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God" (1 Tim. vi. 17). There were indeed not many rich or mighty among the early Christians (1 Cor. i. 26), yet even before the death of Christ we read of a Nicodemus, a Zacchæus, and a Joseph of Arimathæa. **Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.** A general truth applicable to all, but especially neglected by the rich. The quotation (given more fully in 1 Pet. i. 24) is from Isa. xl. 6.

11. **For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind.** This illustration may be taken from the burning sirocco, which, at times, especially in spring, blows from the Eastern desert over Palestine, withering all the young vegetation (Jonah iv. 8). **And withereth.** The *aorist* tenses, in the original, give liveliness to the picture, and signify how *suddenly* the grass withered. **The grass.** Including the beautiful wild flowers. **And the flower thereof falleth.** A very graphic description. On account of the blighting of the plant, we see the flower not only fading, but actually falling off. **And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth.** The grace and beauty of its appearance is destroyed. **So also shall the rich man fade away.** A general truth, with no special reference to the rich brother. **In his goings.** In his wanderings in pursuit of business or pleasure, perhaps with a special reference to the activity manifested by the Jews in trading.

## 5. THE REWARD OF THE ENDURANCE OF TRIAL.

12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* promised to them that love him.

12. **Blessed.** There is a difference between *happiness* and *bliss* or blessedness. Mere happiness cannot satisfy the spiritual nature of man, for happiness is a selfish impulse seeking a complete life in the world. *Blessedness* can only be found where there is peace, resulting from the assurance of forgiveness of sins and from Christian contentment. **Is the man that endureth temptation.** This verse proves that the temptations of verse 2 refer to *trials*, but the blessing is in store for all who overcome any form of temptation. The blessing lies not in the trial, but in its work on the soul, in the victorious endurance of the trial (1 Pet. ii. 20). The sufferings and trials

of a Christian are veils beneath which the love of God conceals itself, and may be regarded partly under the point of view of fatherly *chastisement*, partly under that of fatherly *trial* (Rev. iii. 19). The higher a believer stands in the kingdom of God, the more will he experience, internally or externally, the chastening hand (Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; Rom. viii. 17). **For when he hath been approved.** He is approved because he has victoriously endured, and this approval is the reason why **he shall receive the crown of life.** This crown consists in life eternal (1 John ii. 25). The nearest parallels to our passage are Rev. ii. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. v. 4. Although eternal life begins in this present life (John iii. 36; v. 24; xvii. 3), and is enhanced at the time of the believer's death (Phil. i. 23), its fulness is only attained in the completed kingdom of God. The believer will not receive this crown at the time of the trial, nor even at the particular judgment of approval that awaits him at death, but, as we learn from 2 Tim. iv. 8 and 1 Pet. v. 4, at the time of the Second Advent. **Which the Lord promised.** It is highly probable that in this verse we have a record of the oral teaching of the Lord Jesus, such as we have in Acts xx. 35. **To them that love him.** So also ii. 5. According to John xiv. 21, 23, holy obedience and holy love are essential features of the Christian life. Love to Christ is one with love to the Triune God, for Christ is the centre and resting-point of the Godhead. Promises to those that love God are given also in 1 Cor. ii. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

## 6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIN.

13-15. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.

Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin : and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.

James here profoundly depicts the development of sin in the personal life of the individual.

13. **Let no man say when he is tempted.** This refers to a subjective temptation, inciting to evil. **I am tempted of God.** The Greek is *from* God. Let no one seek to trace the temptation, even indirectly, to God, as if God was the *remote* cause, and thus seek to transfer the guilt from himself. This is a common plea : "God has placed me in such evil surroundings, therefore He is responsible for the sin to which I am driven." **For God cannot be tempted with evil.** "Cannot be tempted" in the Greek is expressed in one word, found only here in the N. T. It is used in later Greek writers in the sense of *untried*, *unversed*, and so some would translate, as in the margin of the Revised Version, *God is untried in evil*. But the following clause, which is its exact correlative in the active voice, makes it certain that James used the word here in the sense of *untemptable*. The thought is, God is untemptable in regard to *evil things*, He is Himself absolutely unsusceptible to evil, **and he himself tempteth no man**. Such is the purity and holiness of God's nature that it is utterly impossible for us to suppose that it is from Him that our temptations to evil and sin proceed. The trials which God sends aim to strengthen and purify us. (See i. 2, 12.)

14. **But each man is tempted.** The margin of R. V. rejects the comma after *tempted* and translates, *tempted by his own lust, being drawn away by it, and enticed*. The thought is almost the same. **When he is drawn away by his own lust.** This evil lust does not, however, exclude the presence of an external tempter, who brings the temptation home and directs it ; but unless there was in

each man "his own lust," the external tempter would have no power. When lust awakes, there is formed a fancy picture which presents itself to lust with a mighty incitement and allurements. If man is able to put to flight this fancy picture, he conquers in the temptation, and the voice of truth is again distinctly heard within. The great danger lies in retaining this picture in the soul, for there lust gains inner strength and increases to passion. **And enticed.** The first effect of lust is to *draw away* the man from his own true self, and the second to *allure* him to a definite bait. We have an example of this enticement, and the steps leading to it, in the history of the Fall of Eve (Gen. iii. 6; 1 John ii. 16). Her lust, her delight in beholding, ended with the sinful action.

**15. Then the lust, when it hath conceived.** In every temptation there is great danger in dallying; with each moment passion rises, and when lust increases to *passion*, "lust conceives," in that it becomes the fertilizing, impelling, and compelling motive for the choosing and deciding will. Then sin is born, for lust **beareth sin**. With the inner decision sin is already born, for the man has now made his choice. Yet sin is finished only when by means of execution it becomes an action. **And the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.** It brings spiritual, bodily, and eternal death—inner and outer misery, a witness of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. iii. 13; Eph. iv. 22). The thought of this verse is also illustrated by Rom. vi. 21–23; viii. 6; Matt. vii. 13, 14. English Commentators call attention to the marvellous allegory of Sin and Death in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Book II. 745–814), elaborated from this passage of James.

## 7. THE PERFECT GIFTS OF GOD.

16–18. Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with

whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

**16. Be not deceived, my beloved brethren.** This is a link between verses 15 and 17, and partly refers to what precedes, but especially to what follows. The same phrase is found in 1 Cor. vi. 9; xv. 33; Gal. vi. 7.

**17. Every good gift and every perfect boon.** The whole clause is an hexameter line, and may be a quotation from an Hellenistic hymn. Other examples of verse quotations in the N. T. are found in Tit. i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 33; Acts xvii. 28; possibly also in John iv. 35; Heb. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 16. Some commentators draw a distinction between *gift* or *giving* and *boon*, as if the former referred to temporal gifts and the latter to spiritual gifts, but this is unnecessary. *Only* good gifts come from God, and all good gifts come *only* from God. **Is from above.** That is, from heaven. **Coming down from the Father of lights.** This explains "is from above." BENGEL: "The title of Father is here peculiarly appropriate, as 'He brought us forth' follows in the next verse. He stands to us in the place both of father and mother. Besides, He is the Father of lights in the kingdom of grace and glory; and therefore much more is He the *Light* itself (1 John i. 5). God is the Father of all lights, the lights of nature as well as of grace." **With whom can be no variation.** The meaning of the Greek is, there is no room for variation, negating not only the fact but also the possibility of variation. (See Lightfoot on Gal. iii. 28.) The light of the heavenly bodies (sun, moon) is constantly changing, but with God, the Father of the lights, there is no change or variation, for God is incapable of change in His own nature. **Neither shadow that is cast by turning.** *Nor shadow* (in consequence) *of change.*



God's light outshines all, it cannot be obscured by anything; no changes in this lower world can cast a shadow on the unchanging Fount of light, for God is incapable of being changed by the action of others (*shadow*). (See Mal. iii. 6; Heb. xiii. 8.)

**18. Of his own will.** So far from God tempting us to evil, His *will* is the cause of our regeneration (Eph. i. 5; John i. 13). It was an act of His goodness and mercy (1 Pet. i. 3; Tit. iii. 5). **He brought us forth.** The verb itself shows that the discourse is of the new birth, and not of the natural birth. **By the word of truth.** The Gospel is called *the word of truth*, because "truth in its entire reality is inherent in it" (Harless on Eph. i. 13). James says that the new birth takes place by means of the preached word, and so does Peter (1 Pet. i. 23). James is writing to adults, who had been regenerated *to* faith by the preaching of the Word, and who through that Word received the Holy Spirit that they might believe on Christ and be baptized into His name (ii. 7). And to this day unbaptized adults must first be regenerated *to* faith before they can be baptized. For it is certainly wrong to say that we are regenerated *by* faith. We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit *to* faith. It is the creative energy of God *in us* which produces faith. This new thing in us, the new birth in its strict sense, is *the gracious presence of God the Holy Spirit* in us. Peter, however, defines the "word of truth" more freely as "the word of good tidings which was preached" (1 Pet. i. 25), and this word points also to *baptism* as a means of regeneration (Acts ii. 38; John iii. 5; Tit. iii. 5). There is no conflict here. Baptism is nowhere regarded, either by James, Peter, or Paul, as an external or symbolical act, attesting simply to the fact of a regeneration which had already taken place. Paul especially lays stress on the

fact that the living fellowship with Christ begins in baptism, when the Spirit of God is communicated to us, and we put on Christ (Rom. vi. 3-5 ; Gal. iii. 27). Before his baptism the believer has no assurance of his justification (Acts xxii. 16 ; Eph. v. 56 ; Acts ii. 38), nor of the fact that the principle of the new life has been implanted in him. **That we should be a kind of firstfruits.** This expresses the aim of the new birth. Lev. xxiii. 10 and Deut. xxvi. 2 shed light on this passage. The offering of the "firstfruits" was a symbol of the consecration of the whole. HUTHER: "They are a kind of a firstfruits of God's creatures, because they, as being born of God, are dedicated to God *first* among all His creatures." These firstfruits are a pledge of a fuller harvest. **Of his creatures.** The whole creation, groaning and travailing in pain together until now, will finally partake in the blessings of redemption and be delivered from the bondage of corruption (Rom. viii. 19-22).

## 8. THE EVIL RESULTS OF WRATH.

19-21. Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath : for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

19. **Ye know *this*, my beloved brethren.** Or, *know ye*, on the ground of their new birth, possessing "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23), James now presses upon his converts three things in particular. **But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.** A general admonition applicable to all Christians, especially to those beginning the Christian life. ALFORD: "Be eager to listen, not eager to discourse ; the former may lead to implanting or strengthening the new life, the

latter to wrath and suddenness of temper, so often found in the wake of swift rejoinder and ready chattering."

20. **For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.** That is, righteousness *in the sight* of God, that which is right before God. The idea of righteousness wrought by God is here altogether unsuitable.

21. **Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness** (*malice*). In order that the growth of the heavenly seed of the Word may not be choked in our hearts, let us put off, like clothes, these filthy garments. Two classes of sins are referred to, the sensual and the malignant. The first class is opposed to holiness, consisting of sins against one's own personality (1 Cor. vi. 18); the second to righteousness (2 Cor. vii. 1), consisting of sins against one's neighbor. **Receive with meekness the implanted** (*inborn*) **word.** This implanted, *rooted* word, whose property it is to root itself like a seed in the heart, is *the word of truth* through which we have been regenerated. Compare the parable of the Sower (Matt. xiii. 3-23; also Matt. xv. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 6). It is the Gospel, **which is able to save your souls**, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16). The new birth from God is a creative act, and its immediate result affects the spiritual life of the whole man, inasmuch as he is thereby made partaker of a new vital energy, which is able to guide the ethical tendency of his nature in conformity with the will of God, because it is of God. We may draw this distinction between regeneration and conversion, that regeneration as a divine act is accomplished in the spirit of man, *the word is implanted*,—while in conversion, that which takes place is accomplished in the mind of man, as a conscious, individual, and personal tendency of the

will. When the word of God, as Law and Gospel, makes the right impression on a human soul, a twofold effect will also be produced, namely, repentance and faith.

### 9. BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD.

22-25. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer, that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

22. **But be ye doers of the word.** Of that word which is preached unto you, "the word of truth" (i. 18), "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. ii. 10). (See also Matt. vii. 24; John xiii. 17; 1 John ii. 6.) **And not hearers only, deluding your own selves.** The hearer deceives and ensnares himself when he infers that the mere hearing of the word by his outward ear will suffice for him.

23. **For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face** (Greek, *the face of his birth*) **in a mirror.** The mirrors in use at this period were of polished metal, and as these presented very imperfect images, it was easy to forget how one looked.

24. **For he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.** So those who are only hearers of the word, soon forget how Scripture presents to each one the picture of his own soul. MAJOR: "The point of comparison here is that the Word will show us what needs to be cleansed and amended in our lives, as the mirror in regard to our bodies. It shows us what we actually are, in contrast with what our deceitful heart paints us (i. 26); it shows us also

what is the true ideal of humanity which we are called upon to realize in our lives."

25. **But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty.** That which James here calls "the perfect law of liberty" is nothing else than *the word of truth* (i. 18), the Gospel, by which Christians are regenerated. He calls this word of truth a law, not in the sense in which the word *law* is generally used, as a requirement made to man from without, but in the same sense as Paul speaks of the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2), "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 2), "a law of faith" (Rom. iii. 27),—as a rule or principle. He calls it the *perfect* law, probably on account of the saying of Christ recorded in Matt. v. 17, because it completes and realizes perfectly the object and meaning of the Mosaic law (Rom. iii. 31); and the law of *liberty*, probably because of Christ's saying recorded by John (viii. 32, 34), "the truth shall make you free," and "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (See also Gal. v. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 17.) **And so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing.** He who appropriates the Gospel and continues in a life of obedience finds peace and blessedness in this life and in the world to come. On *blessedness* see i. 12.

#### 10. THE ESSENCE OF TRUE RELIGION.

26, 27. If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

26. **If any man thinketh himself to be religious.** If he *seemeth to be* or imagines that he is truly serving God. The word *religious* here refers to *external* worship. **While**

**he bridled not his tongue but deceiveth his heart.** This external worship consisted in *much-talking*, in not bridling the tongue. To some zeal in talking about religion is a sign of true religion. But such a one deceives himself, for there is no *reality* in his religion (Matt. xv. 18),—**this man's religion is vain.**

**27. Pure religion and undefiled.** Religion is here defined more particularly by two adjectives, the one positive and the other negative. Perhaps we may with Bengel distinguish between the two,—“proceeding from *pure* love (internal), and removed from worldly *defilement* (external).” **Before our God and Father.** That is, in the sight of God who is our Father. **Is this, to visit.** That is, to care for, to look after and provide for. **The fatherless and widows in their affliction.** This had a special meaning to the Jewish Christians, for there was a special curse of God upon those who afflicted the fatherless and widow (Deut. xxvii. 19). (See also Ps. lxxviii. 5.) **And to keep himself unspotted from the world.** Christians must live in the world, but are not to be of the world (John xv. 19). They must preserve themselves from its contaminating influence. James without giving an exhaustive description of true religion lays stress upon two characteristic marks: (1) a manifestation of compassionate love, and (2) purity of life.

## CHAPTER II.

### II. WARNING AGAINST RESPECT OF PERSONS.

1-4. **My brethren**, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; are ye not divided in your own mind, and become judges with evil thoughts?

1. **My brethren.** (See i. 2.) Specially suitable here, where he is urging them to brotherly kindness. **Hold not the faith.** Margin of R.V., *do ye, in accepting persons hold the faith . . . glory?* It is simpler and more natural to regard the sentence as in the imperative. **Of our Lord Jesus Christ.** That is the faith *in* our Lord (Acts iii. 6; Gal. ii. 16; Rom. iii. 23). See notes on i. 1 and i. 3. **The Lord of glory.** The order of the words in the Greek is remarkable. Some would interpret "the Christ of glory" (Lange), others, "our Lord of glory, Jesus Christ," referring to 1 Cor. ii. 8 (De Wette, Wiesinger), and still others, "of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (most modern commentators). But Bengel gives a perfectly natural and easy construction: "*Glory* is put in apposition with *Lord*, so that Christ Himself is called *the Glory*. Thus James both declares him to be the son of God (*Lord*), and publishes His resurrection from the dead (*Glory*). Christ is the *Glory*; and therefore faith in Him is glorious, and the faithful are glorious." Major and Bassett accept the same construction. Major would translate, "the faith of our Lord Jesus

Christ, who is the glory," and cites 2 Pet. i. 17; Col. i. 27; Rom. ix. 4; John xvii. 22; i. 14; Heb. i. 3, and refers to the similar construction in 1 Tim. i. 1, where all agree in translating, "Christ Jesus, who is our hope." **With respect of persons.** Here James refers to one form of the transgression of the spirit of *true religion*. In *spiritual* matters, no partiality is to be shown on account of worldly distinctions, whether at the administration of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 21), or in reproving sin (1 Tim. v. 21), or in seating believers in Christian assemblies for public worship, as *here*.

2. **For if there come into your synagogue (*assembly*).** For the first thirty years of the Christian Church there was a close connection between the Church and the Synagogue. It is plain that this meeting-place was open to all, Jews and Christians, but it is assumed that it was mainly under Christian direction. **A man with a gold ring.** The wearing of rings was customary among the Jews (Luke xv. 22), and is still so. For men to wear rings, especially ear-rings, is now regarded as a sign of effeminacy. **In fine clothing.** Orientals love to array themselves in gorgeous clothing. In the Early Church Christians were warned against fine clothing and the wearing of rings (*Const. Apost.* I. 3). **And there come in also a poor man in vile clothing.** We need not decide whether these two men are Christians or not. In each case we must suppose the man is a stranger, and each has his place assigned to him simply on the ground of the appearance of his clothing, whether it is "fine" or "shabby."

3. **And ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool.** That is, sit on the floor, below or close to my



footstool. It is difficult to see how, in the face of these plain words of James, the system of renting pews can be defended or continued, as long as the free seats for the poor and strangers are placed in the least desirable part of the church. The inequalities of rank and station are sufficiently acknowledged in the distinctions of common life, without emphasizing it in the house of God. Strangers entering a place of worship should be provided with the most desirable seats.

4. **Are ye not divided in your own mind?** If we translate this difficult passage so, the thought is, you have not a single eye, you are double-minded (i. 8), you are influenced by worldly considerations, and look to the world, and not to Christ only; you have fallen into a contradiction with your faith (ii. 1). A more natural translation is the one given in the margin of the R. V., *Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves?* **And become judges with evil thoughts.** That is, judges biased by evil and unfair reasoning. James calls them judges, because in their conduct they expressed their judgment.

## 12. FULFIL THE ROYAL LAW.

5-9. Hearken, my beloved brethren; did not God choose them that are poor as to the world *to be* rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him? But ye have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by the which ye are called? Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.

5. **Hearken, my beloved brethren.** (See notes on i. 2; ii. 1.) **Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world *to be* rich in faith?** Paul speaks in the same strain in that remarkable passage in 1 Cor. i. 27-29. The sphere within which this riches is imparted is *in faith*, so

far as they believe, and the riches itself consists in being "heirs of the kingdom." (Compare Luke vi. 20; xii. 31, 32.) **And heirs of the kingdom.** James is here speaking of the future kingdom of glory. Paul gives great prominence to the thought that believers are heirs, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). **Which he promised to them that love him.** (See notes on i. 12.)

6. **But ye have dishonoured the poor man.** Instead of showing love and respect, causing him to forget his earthly surroundings, you have openly put him to shame. **Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats?** You certainly have no reason for showing such obsequious favor to the rich; they are the very persons who are persecuting you because you are Christians. These *judgment-seats* were evidently the Jewish tribunals, certainly not Christian courts of justice.

7. **Do not they blaspheme.** These blasphemers are unbelieving Jews, as in Acts xiii. 45. **The honourable name by the which ye are called,** or *which was called upon you.* The question is whether the reference is to the name *Christian*, which was apparently in use at Antioch before 45 A. D. (Acts xi. 26), and used afterwards by Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 28), and by Peter (1 Pet. iv. 16), or whether it is the name of *Christ* which was invoked over each individual believer at the time of his baptism (Acts ii. 38). The reference to baptism seems to be the better explanation.

8. **Howbeit if ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** James had in mind not only Lev. xix. 18, but also the words of Christ recorded by the three Synoptists (Matt. xxii. 39; Mark xii. 31; Luke x. 27). Love to one's

neighbor is called the royal law, because all other laws are contained in it, and love is the very essence of the Gospel. Paul says, "he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. xiii. 8; Gal. v. 14), because if he has this love, no law is necessary; if he has it not, no law is sufficient, for this free impulse of love to one's neighbor is the fruit of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 5). **Ye do well.** *Well and good*; but this you can never do, as long as you respect persons.

5. **But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.** We need not here decide whether by *the law* James meant "the royal law" just mentioned, or the moral law in general, which latter, however, is most likely. The Word is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. i. 16; James i. 21), and in this Word we must abide (John viii. 31; xv. 7). In its twofold form as Law and Gospel, it has the power of convicting men of their sins, by working repentance and faith. There is a threefold use of the law: (1) Political, to keep order in society; (2) pedagogic, to awaken the conviction of sin, to alarm the conscience, and thus to become a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; and (3) didactic, to enlighten the regenerate. Through justifying faith the regenerate enters upon a new relation to God and to the law, and he becomes a partaker of a new life. This new life in Christ has become in us the principle of liberty, and we live our life after the impulse of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 14). This ideal life, however, only becomes approximately realized. We *are* God's children only so that we likewise are to *become* such. No one attains to a perfectly harmonious life of liberty this side of the grave. A Christian, therefore, all his life, will need what is known as the *didactic* use of the law.

### 13. LIVE BY THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

10-13. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is become guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. For judgement *is* without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgement.

10. **For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.** James seems to have in mind one who thinks himself to be religious (i. 26), and assumes that he is keeping the whole law. This verse contains a general statement, confirming the thought that respect of persons, though it appears only as a transgression of the law of love, includes the transgression of the whole law. This agrees with what Paul teaches, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 23).

11. **For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law.** The spiritual nature and the unity of the law is more fully illustrated in this verse. There is only one Law-giver (iv. 12), and those who violate His will in one point violate His whole will. The order of the commandments here, as in Luke xviii. 20; Rom. xiii. 9, follows an ancient tradition, as old as the Septuagint, and shows how extensive the use of the Greek Bible was in the days of Christ.

12. **So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged.** James sums up his exhortations. You have been regenerated (i. 18); the implanted Word (i. 21) worketh in you that faith (i. 3) which gives freedom to Christ (see notes on i. 25); you are now living under the Gospel, enjoying the glorious liberty of the children of God, and your responsibility is therefore so much the greater;

your ideal life is now higher than when under the law, and the judgment will be the more severe, for now you will be judged **by a law of liberty**, according to the privileges you have enjoyed under the Gospel.

**13. For judgement is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy.** What a terrible warning to selfish, parsimonious, and worldly-minded professing Christians! The failure to show mercy or consideration for others forbids us to expect mercy ourselves at the time of judgment. This is one aspect of the great law of divine retribution. This is simply a reproduction of Christ's plain teaching (Matt. vii. 1; v. 7; vi. 14). See also the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. xviii. 21-35) and the description of the Final Judgment (Matt. xxv. 41-46). **Mercy glorieth against judgement.** That is, mercy triumphs over judgment. The principle laid down here is to supply the rule for the believer's daily life. He who shows mercy, who gives evidence of compassionate love (ii. 1-9), and shows his faith by his works (ii. 14-26) has the joyful confidence that he will be justified in the day of judgment (ii. 24), for mercy will triumph over the threatening power of judgment. James continually supports his warnings by an appeal to the final judgment (v. 9, 12). He takes certain great truths for granted—the more responsibility one takes upon himself, so much heavier a judgment has one to expect (iii. 1); the advent of the Messianic Judge of the world is near (v. 3, 7, 9); the miseries which will then befall the ungodly are already in the act of coming upon them (v. 1); the day of their destruction is imminent (v. 5); the judgment shall consume the flesh of the godless as fire (v. 3), and overtake the soul of the unbeliever with eternal death (v. 20). All this is in perfect harmony with the teaching of the N. T. The statement of James that Christians are to be

judged "as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty" (ii. 12) reminds us very forcibly of the saying of Christ, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge them in the last day" (John xii. 48).

14. THE GREAT LAW OF RETRIBUTION, STATED IN II. 13, ILLUSTRATED.—AT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT GOD WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS.—FAITH APART FROM WORKS IS DEAD.

14-26. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith apart from *thy* works, and I by my works will shew thee *my* faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect, and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

Although it is difficult to make a logical analysis of the whole Epistle, on account of its proverbial character, nevertheless we can readily trace a progress in the argument. Christians are to be doers of the Word (i. 22; ii. 12), not hearers only (i. 21, 22, 25); he who assumes that he is religious, while he bridleth not his tongue (i. 26), deceiveth his own heart, for such a man's religion is vain; pure religion has its distinctive marks (i. 27), and the faith that shows respect of persons (ii. 1, 9) is not

that faith which triumphs and saves in the day of judgment (ii. 13), for then "judgment is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy." James now proceeds to illustrate this great law of retribution, and to discuss more fully the nature of such a lifeless profession of faith.

**14. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith.** If he thinketh himself to be religious. **But have no works.** Who shows no mercy (ii. 13), who has respect of persons (ii. 9), who does not manifest compassionate love (ii. 8), who does not keep himself unspotted from the world (i. 27), who bridleth not his tongue (i. 26). **Can that faith save him?** Can such a professed faith save him at the day of judgment, when "judgment is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy" (ii. 13)?

**15, 16. If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?** We have here a concrete illustration of the abstract principle stated in verse 14. John makes the same application (I John iii. 17).

**17. Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.** We have here the application of the preceding verses. James asserts that such professed faith, spoken of in verse 14, is *inwardly* dead, it has no life.

**18. Yea, a man (*But some one*) will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works.** James has not only shown that such professed faith is of no value, *dead in itself*, but he goes on to say that its existence is incapable of proof. He supports his foregoing argument by introducing, as it were, a friendly speaker. **Shew me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will shew thee my faith.**

Prove the existence of your faith, if you can, by any evidence except that of works ; while I, by my works, will exhibit my faith in the only way in which proof of it can be given. The only evidence of our faith which we can offer in this life in the sight of men is by displaying it by our works.

19. **Thou believest that God is one.** This is the better attested reading. Some ancient authorities read, *there is one God*. Compare the great confession of the Jews, "Hear, O Israel : the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). It is not necessary to decide whether verse 19 is to be regarded as the words of the supposed friendly speaker of verse 18, or of James, for the latter accepts the great truth here taught, and continues the argument of verse 17 with the next verse. **Thou doest well.** Ironical. **The devils (*demons*) also believe.** In the N. T., the *demons* are spoken of as spiritual beings, at enmity with God, and having power to afflict man, not only with disease, but, as marked by the frequent epithet "unclean," with spiritual pollution also. In Acts xix. 12, 13, they are defined as the "evil spirits." There is but one *Devil*, and the *demons* are "the angels of the devil" (Matt. xxv. 41). **And shudder,** for fear and horror of their punishment, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29). The thought is, Thou sayest thou hast faith,—yes, it may exist, such as it is, but it contains only the same elements of faith which the evil angels have, who shall not be saved, but who are reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. ii. 4), even unto everlasting punishment (Matt. xxv. 41). They realize their condition and shudder, but you do not even perceive your deplorable condition, for unless you repent, the same judgment shall overtake you. Mere intellectual knowledge and mental assent do not constitute true



faith. Where confidence (loving trust) is lacking, there can be no salvation.

20. **But wilt thou know, O vain man.** That man is *vain* or *empty*, in whom the higher wisdom has found no entrance, who is puffed up with a vain conceit of his own spiritual insight. **That faith apart from works is barren.** That is *idle*, referring to the internal condition and nature of faith. Such faith profits and effects nothing. (Compare verse 17, *dead in itself*.)

21. **Was not Abraham our father.** James now cites the example of Abraham to show the contrast between a mere profession of faith, that cannot save (ii. 14) either now in this life or at the time of judgment (ii. 13), and true faith, that has works as its fruit (ii. 14, 17, 20). **Justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar.** *Justified*, not simply in the sense "he proved himself righteous" (Calvin, Philippi, etc.), in the sight of men, but especially "was declared righteous" in the sight of God, at the particular judgment that came upon Abraham at the time of his death. We must retain the judicial meaning of the word. God declared Abraham righteous on the ground of his works, and the work which in God's sight, as here stated, procured for him justification was the sacrifice of his son Isaac. James proves the reality and genuineness of Abraham's faith, not by *all* his works of faith, but he simply singles out *one*, the sacrifice of his son. With Paul, who has a different object altogether in view, it is Abraham's faith *in the promise of a son* that justifies (Gen. xv. 5, 6; Rom. iv. 3, 13-22); in the Epistle to the Hebrews the faith of Abraham is illustrated (1) by his sojourning in a land not his own (Heb. xi. 8-10), and (2) by offering up Isaac, in the faith that God would raise him up again from the dead (Heb. xi. 17-19). What James means to say in this

verse is this, here is an example of the faith I mean, not simply your profession and idle talk.

The question here arises, when did the justification *by works*, of which James (here and in verse 24) speaks, take place? It is true indeed that Abraham was justified before God from the very moment he believed, and to this justification by faith James refers in verse 23,—but of this James is not here speaking, for he has specially in view the cold, barren orthodoxy of the Pharisaic Christian Jews, fruitless in works. It is also true that men could only see Abraham's faith by its evidence, but of this justification in the sight of men James is not now thinking, nor did this justification of which James speaks take place at the time when the offering was made, that is not the thought of James,—for the participial sentence “in that he offered up” does not declare the time of justification, but what works procured for Abraham justification in God's sight. The whole context gives us the key to the solution. He is speaking of that justification that takes place when the final salvation shall be awarded to the believer (ii. 12, 14), whether we think of it as the particular judgment at death, or of the final judgment at the last day, of which Christ also speaks, “For in the day of judgment, by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. xii. 36, 37). (See *Introduction*, pp. 18–22.)

**22. Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.** Some would make this sentence interrogative as in the margin of R. V., *Seest thou . . . perfect?* This statement is an inference from the preceding statement. Abraham's faith was not dead in itself (ii. 17), nor idle and barren (ii. 20), but alive and active, *working*, it brought forth fruit. There was a mutual relation between faith and

works, faith was being tested and proved, and the proving of Abraham's faith (i. 3) had its perfect work (i. 4), and faith became stronger and more perfect and victorious.

23. **And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.** In the sacrifice of Isaac the statement of Gen. xv. 6, spoken some twenty years before, was fulfilled. The faith which Abraham had, at the time he believed in the promise of a son and heir, was not a dead, idle, and barren faith, but a true, genuine faith, and God reckoned it unto him for righteousness, *purely* because he believed God at that very time. The justification of which James speaks in verses 21 and 24 does not refer to the daily justification of the believer, but to that justification which occurs at the time of judgment. **And he was called the friend of God.** These precise words are not found in the Hebrew nor in the Greek Bible. (See 2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8.) In Gen. xviii. 17 the Greek Bible reads "from Abraham, my son."

24. **Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.** James does not here refer to the daily justification by which the believer daily receives forgiveness of sins, in the Pauline sense of the word, but he is speaking of the day of judgment (ii. 13), when "judgment is without mercy to him that hath shewed no mercy," when the final salvation is awarded, and men are rewarded according to their works. Then, "not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21), for "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii. 20). James does not in any way deny the glorious Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, nor has he denied this doctrine in ii. 14; he in fact

explicitly grants that righteousness is reckoned through faith (ii. 23) in the strict Pauline sense, "for Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness;" but what James wishes to make clear is, that at the time of judgment in the day when final salvation will be awarded (ii. 12, 13), then such professed faith in which these Pharisaic Jewish Christians prided and plumed themselves, which has not in it the very thing that constitutes true faith, confidence, trust, and love to God, will not avail before God, "for at the righteous judgment of God, he will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 6).

**25. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?** James now gives another example of true faith; possibly for the sake of contrast he selects Rahab *the harlot*. In Heb. xi. 31 her faith is also spoken of, and she is mentioned as being one of the ancestors of Christ (Matt. i. 5). The narrative in Josh. ii. 1-21 gives us the history of the genuineness of her faith.

**26. For as the body apart from the spirit is dead.** When Paul speaks of man as consisting of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. v. 23), he does not mean three co-ordinate elements in man; *body* and *spirit* are of distinct natures, but the *soul* is of one nature with the spirit. The spirit is the inward being of the soul, and the soul is the external nature of the spirit. It is the spirit that gives life to the soul, and it is the soul that animates the body. James uses a very forcible illustration. If the spirit leaves the body, and in this leaving taking also the soul with it,—for soul and spirit are never separated,—then the body is dead,—nothing is left but a corpse; **even so faith apart from works is dead.** Yes, such a

mere lifeless profession, the assent of the intellect to certain dogmas or truths, such intellectual knowledge and mental assent, which some professing Christians, having become cold and indifferent to their first love, *call* faith, is nothing but a dead corpse, not only barren and idle (ii. 20), but dead in itself (ii. 17),—for all these are such who “profess that they know God, but by their works they deny Him” (Tit. i. 16). For a fuller discussion of the Jacobean and Pauline doctrine of justification, see *Introd.* pp. 18–22.

## CHAPTER III.

### 15. WARNINGS WITH REGARD TO SINS OF THE TONGUE.

1-12. Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgement. For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. Behold, the ships also, though they are so great, and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth. So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; *it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.* Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the likeness of God: out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet *water* and bitter? can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither *can* salt water yield sweet.

James now returns to the sins of the tongue already referred to in i. 19 and i. 26. These Christian Jews, like so many professing Christian of modern times, instead of being fruitful in works of compassionate love (ii. 1-9), were very anxious to give advice and instruction to others.

1. **Be not many teachers, my brethren.** Let not many of you become teachers. **Knowing that we shall receive heavier (*greater*) judgement.** The responsibility of the teacher is greater than that of other Christians,

and if he teaches falsely, his condemnation will be the greater. James includes himself (*we*) among the teachers whom he warns. In his letter sent out after the meeting of the Council in 50 A. D., James condemns certain teachers (Acts xv. 24). This verse is an echo of the sayings of our Lord (Matt. xxiii. 8-10). "No one should publicly teach in the Church, unless he be regularly called" (*Augs. Conf.*, Art. XIV.).

2. **For in many things we all stumble.** BENDEL : "The Apostles do not even except themselves" (1 John i. 8). **If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man.** If a man is able to bridle his tongue (i. 26), he is a full-grown man in maturity of Christian character and upright conduct. The word *perfect* does not mean an absolutely sinless man. (See notes on i. 4.) **Able to bridle the whole body also.** Self-discipline, shown in controlling the tongue, is a proof that a man has his whole self under control.

3. **Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also.** The reality of the power which the tongue possesses is now illustrated by two comparisons.

4. **Behold, the ships also, though they are so great, and are driven by rough winds, are yet turned about by a very small rudder, whither the impulse of the steersman willeth.** The bridle in the mouth of a horse, the rudder of a great ship, the tongue of a man, are small things in themselves, but by these the whole body in each case can be controlled.

5. **So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things.** Not simply vain boasting either, for it is able to do very great things, either for good or evil. **Behold, how much wood (*how great a forest*) is kindled by how small a fire!** The *destructive* power of the

tongue is now under consideration. A little spark can kindle a conflagration, so also the tongue can equally do great injury.

6. **And the tongue is a fire.** Like a spark it sets on fire not only the whole life of the individual, but ignites the soul of others. **The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue.** The margin of R. V. punctuates differently and translates: *And the tongue is a fire, that world of iniquity: the tongue is among our members that which defileth*, etc. The thought is the same. The tongue *is constituted* a world of iniquity among our members, because as the organ of *wrath* (i. 19, 20) it contains within itself the elements of all unrighteousness. The Greek verb used implies a development, as contrasted with its natural or original state. The tongue "is the universe of mischief, as containing within it all the elements of mischief" (WORDSWORTH). **Which defileth the whole body.** Because "that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (Matt. xv. 11), and "the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man" (Matt. xv. 18, 19). **And setteth on fire the wheel of nature (*birth*).** That is, it sets on fire "the wheel of birth," revolving from birth and which will roll on until death,—"the whole of life from birth." The tongue keeps stirring up and fanning the spark of original sin which is rooted in each individual. **And is set on fire by hell.** The history of the generation of sin is now complete. The sin and lust of the individual, so graphically described in i. 14, 16, has its origin in *hell* proper, in *Gehenna*. The word *Gehenna*—in contradistinction to Hades, which is the place of departed spirits separated from the body—is always used in the N. T. to designate the place of punishment for body and soul united (Matt. x. 28). It is



“the lake of fire” into which finally, after the general resurrection and judgment, the wicked shall be cast (Rev. xx. 14, 15), as well as Satan himself (Rev. xx. 10). The thought of our passage is, the tongue is set on fire by hell, that is, by him who has the centre of his kingdom there, by the devil himself.

7. **For every kind (*nature*) of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by (*unto*) mankind (*the human nature*).** This is literally true.

8. **But the tongue can no man tame.** Even the believer cannot tame it perfectly, “for in many things we all stumble (iii. 2). *It is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison.* It keeps stirring up the power of sin still remaining in us. We can only tame the tongue in so far as we allow the Spirit of God to rule our hearts. If we wish to rule the tongue, we must rule our thoughts, and if we would rule our thoughts, we must begin with the heart, “for out of the heart come forth evil thoughts” (Matt. xv. 19).

9. **Therewith bless we the Lord and Father ; and therewith curse we men.** A proof that the tongue is a *restless evil*. A man may not only be double-minded (i. 7), but also doubled-tongued,—with the same tongue blessing God and cursing men made in the image of God. The combination *Lord and Father* as a designation of God occurs nowhere else in the Bible. In i. 27 we have *our God and Father*. **Which are made after the likeness of God.** After Gen. i. 26. MAJOR: “Though the divine image is traceable in every child of man, yet it is only perfect in the Second Adam (Heb. i. 3; Col. i. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 4), into whose image the believer is being gradually transformed” (Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24; 2 Cor. iii. 18).

10. **Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and**

**cursing.** My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Where there is the true spirit of blessing there can be no cursing. This mixture proves the unreality and insincerity of the blessing.

**11. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter.** In this first illustration James shows the *unnaturalness* of such conduct.

**12. Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? neither can salt water yield sweet.** In these three illustrations, also taken from nature, James shows the *impossibility* of a true worship coming from a heart where the spirit of wrath is working. Such a Christian profession is but a sham and hypocrisy.

#### 16. TRUE AND FALSE WISDOM CONTRASTED.

**13-18.** Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not *a wisdom* that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.

**13. Who is wise and understanding among you?** This verse stands in close connection with iii. 1, and the close of it carries us back to i. 19, "slow to speak." By *understanding* is meant the practical wisdom which comes from Christian experience. **Let him shew by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom.** His *works* are especially to be manifested in *words*. Let them be gentle and modest, *in meekness of wisdom*. This meekness is the result of true wisdom (i. 21). Defend the faith "with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. iii. 15, 16).

**14. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your**

**heart.** James refers to party-spirit of every kind. For if there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal? (1 Cor. iii. 3). **Glory not and lie not against the truth.** Some would interpret, "lie not against the facts of the case." Better, lie not against the Christian truth revealed in the Gospel. If you have such a bitter spirit in your hearts, your Christian profession is a lie (1 John i. 6).

15. **This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly.** We have here a description of false wisdom, negatively and positively, the last three objections in this verse forming a descending climax of wickedness. Such wisdom is *earthly*: it neither has its origin *in* nor belongs *to* heaven. **Sensual**, that is, *natural, animal*, belonging to the senses, opposing the Spirit, "having not the Spirit" (Jude 19). **Devilish**, that is *demoniacal*, a vivid description of this wisdom, both as to its origin and its nature. It comes from and is fed, set on fire, by hell (iii. 6), by Satan himself, the prince of demons.

16. **For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed.** This gives the reason of the strong statement made in verse 15. Referring back to verse 14, he here names the fruit which *jealousy* and *strife* bring forth. The God whom the believer seeks to glorify "is not a God of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). (See also 2 Cor. xii. 20; Phil. ii. 3.)

17. **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.** The *inner* characteristic of true wisdom is *purity*, its outer, *peaceableness*. (See Matt. v. 8, 9; 2 Cor. vi. 6.) **Gentle.** Compare "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 1). **Easy to be intreated.** Pliant, submissive, docile, easy to persuade. One word in Greek, only here in N. T. **Full of mercy and good**

**fruits.** Rich in the manifestation of active love. Mercy or compassion is the clearest proof of love (i. 27 ; ii. 13). **Without variance** or *doubtfulness* (*partiality*). One word in Greek, only here in N. T. Whole-hearted, undivided, impartial. **Without hypocrisy.** Upright, genuine, unfeigned,—used of love (1 Pet. i. 22 ; 2 Cor. vi. 6), of faith (1 Tim. i. 5 ; 2 Tim. i. 5). “Neither making any pretensions to what it is not, nor disguising what it is” (WORDSWORTH). All these attributes are ascribed to wisdom, because these graces are the fruit of true wisdom.

18. **And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace.** The fruit *which yields or consists in* righteousness is sown not in discord but *in peace*. **For them that make peace.** This is better than *by* them, although it is true that the believers who sow are the peacemakers, and these same persons also reap the harvest. They who sow the seed enjoy the fruit. (See Heb. xii. 11 ; Gal. vi. 7.) Compare the portrait of true wisdom as drawn here by James, with that of love as portrayed in 1 Cor. xiii.

## CHAPTER IV.

### 17. WORLDLINESS THE CAUSE OF STRIFE.

1-3. Whence *come* wars and whence *come* fightings among you ? *come they* not hence, *even* of your pleasures that war in your members ? Ye lust, and have not : ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain : ye fight and war ; ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend *it* in your pleasures.

1. **Whence *come* wars and whence *come* fightings among you ?** This section is in close connection with what precedes. "A painful transition from the ideal to the actual, all the more striking from its abruptness" (SCOTT). ***Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members ?*** The internal reason of all this strife lies in the fleshly lusts that dwell and rage in their bodies (Gal. v. 19, 20), which war not only against the soul (1 Pet. ii. 11), and against the inner law of the mind (Rom. viii. 23), but also against everything which hinders the gratification of the desire of earthly riches (iv. 3).

2. **Ye lust, and have not : ye kill, and covet (*are jealous*), and cannot obtain : ye fight and war.** This is a general statement founded on O. T. history, showing to what sins a desire for earthly riches will lead. The extraordinary anti-climax "ye kill and covet" has long exercised the minds of commentators. It is probably best to punctuate: "Ye lust, and have not : ye kill. Also ye covet, and cannot obtain : ye fight and war." Two leading sins are referred to ; the first may be illus-

trated by the sin of David (2 Sam. xi.), the second by the sin of Ahab (1 Kings xxi.). **Ye have not, because ye ask not.** "This then was the secret of the restless cravings and the ever-returning disappointments. They had never once made their wants the subject of a true and earnest prayer."

3. **Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.** Some have thought that these accusations could not have been addressed to Christian churches, and all kinds of forced explanations have been attempted. But everything is consistent. Among the believing Christians there were some false professors, as there are to this day, who sought for riches in ungodly and unrighteous ways. **That ye may spend it in your pleasures.** On the spirit of true prayer see notes on i. 5, 6. Petitionary prayer, if only it be offered in true faith in the name of Jesus, may have reference also to bodily wants, as we see from the Lord's Prayer, although these petitions must come in their proper place.

## 18. THE UNFAITHFUL REPROVED.

4-II. Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God. Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore *the scripture* saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you.

4. **Ye adulteresses.** The word is to be taken in the figurative sense, of spiritual adultery, of souls who have broken their vows to God. There is no reference to distinction of sex. We need not decide whether the refer-

ence is to *individuals* or to churches,—most likely the former. **Know ye not.** Probably with reference to the words of Christ (Matt. vi. 24). **That the friendship of the world.** The worldly spirit, and its lust (1 John ii. 15, 16). **Is enmity with God.** Because it pampers to the mind of the flesh (Rom. viii. 7). **Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world.** No man who makes worldly success his aim can be a friend of God. **Maketh himself.** Becomes, *is constituted*, by that very act **an enemy of God.** The same Greek word occurs in iii. 6, “the tongue *maketh itself, is constituted* the world of iniquity among our members.”

5. **Or think ye that the scripture speaketh (*saieth*) in vain?** A small volume might be written on the history of the interpretation of this verse. Difficulties have been raised where none exist. The R. V. in the text gives us the correct thought. James urges his readers to give up their worldly spirit by two arguments, which he condenses into two piercing questions. There is no reference to any particular passage in the O. T., but to its general tenor, which ascribes jealousy to God (Ex. xx. 5; xxxiv. 14, 15; Deut. xxxii. 21; Zech. viii. 2, etc.). **Doth the spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?** The *Revisers* make two other attempts to translate this passage, as given in the *margin*, making both declarative sentences.—*the spirit which he made to dwell in us he yearneth for even unto jealous envy*, or, *that spirit which he made to dwell in us yearneth for us even unto jealous envy*. The thought of this difficult passage, whether regarded as a question or a simple statement, is, the Spirit which God made to dwell in us through baptism (ii. 7), and which continually comes through the preached Word (i. 21), doth not lust after the friendship of the world, but, on the contrary, the Spirit in us jeal-

ously yearns for the entire devotion and consecration of our heart.

6. **But he giveth more (a greater) grace.** Encouragement to resist the worldly spirit. If you have the Spirit of God, the proof of it will be seen in your continual growth in grace. **Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud.** From Prov. iii. 34, according to the Greek Bible. Quoted also by 1 Pet. v. 5. **But giveth grace to the humble.** Humility is always the basis of all true growth in grace (Matt. v. 3-9). Absolute self-surrender to God receives its reward by a richer supply of divine grace.

7. **Be subject therefore unto God.** Several exhortations to humility follow, with suggestions how to attain this grace. **But resist the devil, and he will flee from you.** For we need not be under his dominion, although he is at the root of this worldly spirit, fanning its flame (iii. 15), the prince of this world (John xii. 31; xiv. 30. Compare especially Eph. ii. 2, 3; vi. 11, 12; 1 Pet. v. 8). The more strongly sin develops itself as self-exaltation, the more closely does man come to resemble the devil and his angels.

8. **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** (See Ps. cxlv. 18.) We draw near to God not only in prayer, but in every kind of spiritual worship, in singing, in hearing God's word, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, etc. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts.** (Compare Ps. xxiv. 4; lxxiii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 22.) There can be no drawing nigh to God without a life of conversion. Although conversion may be regarded as a single event in a definite portion of man's life, the matter is by no means so that we are done with conversion once for all. We need to live continually in an active state of conversion, which consists of two parts, repent-



ance and faith, and both must be daily exercised. **Ye doubleminded.** Who would be friends with God and the world. (See note on i. 8.)

9. **Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.** In this verse we have a description of the repentance required of the worldly-minded. Voluntarily abstain from the luxuries of life; deny self and take up the cross. Bring your body into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27), and be also inwardly afflicted. **Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.** James is speaking of "the godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation" (2 Cor. vii. 10). Genuine repentance consists in this, that a man suffering from the stings of conscience allows himself to be rebuked and condemned by the law, and acknowledges the justice of this condemnation with his whole heart. It is a deep internal pain, a contrition and sorrow, not for this or for that single sin simply, but it is a deep grief for his whole sinful and guilty state, and for his separation from God.

10. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord.** This willingness to bow down before God characterizes the true repentance of the converted man, but this willingness springs not so much from the law as from the Gospel. **And he shall exalt you.** This exaltation is ours not only in this life, but it shall receive its consummation in the promised kingdom of glory.

#### 19. EVIL SPEAKING REBUKED.

11, 12. Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. One *only* is the lawgiver and judge, *even* he who is able to save and to destroy: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?

11. **Speak not one against another, brethren.** James now passes to another exhortation, which however is close-

ly related to the abuse of the tongue so often already referred to (i. 19, 26 ; ii. 12 ; iii. 1-10). This evil-speaking, or slander, has its origin in pride (iv. 16). Among the vices there exists a mutual connection, and one vice easily leads to another. Pride is inseparable from despising your neighbor, and with this is conjoined envy, distrust, and slander. **He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law.** It seems James has here in view the law of love, the royal law of ii. 8, of love to neighbors, which view is also supported by the reference to "thy neighbor" in the next verse. **And judgeth the law : but if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.** He who speaks against a brother speaks against the law of love. He who speaks against a law, treats it as a bad law, and passes judgment upon it and says it ought not to be law. He becomes a judge and would propose a better law.

12. **One only is the lawgiver and judge.** But who art thou so ready to pass judgment? Judgment belongs only to Him who has given the law. **Even he who is able to save and to destroy : but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour ?** James is always thinking of the day of judgment, as in ii. 14-26. We are reminded of Christ's saying, "Fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matt. x. 28). (See also John v. 22 ; 1 Cor. iv. 3-5.)

## 20. THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE.

13-17. Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life ? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that. But now ye glory in your vauntings : all such glorying is evil. To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

13. **Go to now, ye that say.** These words are es-

pecially addressed to the rich, and to those who live only for gain, who in their desire and plans for the acquisition of wealth too often forget God. **To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain.** The speaker is supposed to be dilating on his plans, rehearsing the matter with his friends, with map in his hand. The whole scene reminds us of the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke xii. 15-21).

14. **Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, What is your life?** Prov. xxvii. 1, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." **For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time.** A *vapor*, a breath. The Greek word is often used for *smoke*. (Compare Job viii. 9.) **And then vanisheth away.** (Compare Ps. cxliv. 4.)

15. **For that ye ought to say.** Literal Greek, *Instead of your saying*. **If the Lord will.** Paul often uses this expression (Acts xviii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 19; Phil. ii. 24; etc.). In speaking or writing of future plans, it is a good habit to add "God willing," in Latin *Deo volente*, often expressed by the letters D. V. But whether these words are expressed or not, the thought must always be in your heart. **We shall both live, and do this or that.** For both our life and our actions depend on the will of God.

16. **But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil.** BENDEL: "Their arrogance is expressed in the words *we will go . . . and get gain* (iv. 13); their *boasting* in their presuming on time." The Greek word for *vauntings* is found only here and in 1 John ii. 16, "the *vainglory* of life." It implies confidence in one's cleverness, skill, strength,—self-reliance on the duration of earthly prosperity.

17. **To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and**

**doeth it not, to him it is sin.** In this verse we have a summing up of all that James had said before (i. 22 ; ii. 14 ; iii. 1, 13 ; iv. 11). Compare the sayings of Christ (John ix. 41 ; Luke xii. 47 ; John xv. 22 ; xiii. 17). We not only *commit* many sins (*sins of commission*), but we *omit* very often to do those things which are well-pleasing to God (*sins of omission*).

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## CHAPTER V.

### 21. WARNINGS TO THE RICH JEWS.

1-6. Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted ; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out : and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth and taken your pleasure ; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous *one* ; he doth not resist you.

1. **Go to now, ye rich.** Addressed not so much to rich Christian Jews as to the rich Jews who were everywhere persecuting the believers. But these warnings are applicable to all who in any respect follow in their footsteps. WORDSWORTH : " Perhaps there is not a nobler specimen of heroic courage and holy eloquence, and of poetical fervor, sublimity and pathos, in the range of Hebrew prophecy, than is to be found in this last chapter." **Weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you.** Like a prophet of old, James sees the judgment coming upon them, with its accompanying miseries. These miseries were *impending*, hanging over them, for " the coming of the Lord was at hand " (v. 7, 8). Just as Christ, in Matt. xxiv., so here James draws no sharp line of distinction between the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Advent of our Lord.

2. **Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.** The verbs in Greek are in the perfect. In

a prophetic manner the future is described as having already taken place, as in Isa. liii. 3-10.

3. **Your gold and your silver are rusted : and their rust shall be for a testimony against (unto) you.** In the destruction of their treasures they see depicted their own. Your heart is set on earthly things; these perish, and in like manner you also are doomed to perish. (Compare Matt. x. 39.) **And shall eat your flesh as fire.** For the punishment of divine judgment shall overtake you as a devouring fire. MAJOR deduces a good practical application: "As the rust eats into the metal, so selfish covetousness, of which it is the sign, shall eat into your materialized souls like a canker, destroying all the finer and more generous qualities." **Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days.** You think that you have made provision for the future. I will speak plainly with you; you are treasuring up for yourselves wrath in the day of wrath (Rom. ii. 5, 6), and this time is near at hand. With James *the last days* meant the period immediately preceding the Second Coming of the Lord (v. 7, 8).

4. **Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out.** Four sins are mentioned in Scripture as *crying* to Heaven: the murder of a brother (Gen. iv. 10), the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xviii. 20), the oppression of Israel in Egypt (Ex. ii. 23, 24), and the withholding of wages (Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 15). **And the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.** The expression *Lord of Sabaoth* occurs only here and Rom. ix. 29 in the N. T. (See Isa. v. 9.) It is characteristic of James that he gives the Hebrew form. The name expresses the omnipotence of God, His supermundane power and glory, ruling the hosts of heaven (heavenly bodies and celestial spirits), and His provi-

dence, interposing according to His free and sovereign will, in the affairs of the world.

**5. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure ; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.** You have had your good things in this life, but now the day of reckoning, that day of wrath, is coming. By your luxurious living and self-indulgence you have fattened yourselves like sheep, unconscious of their doom. We have in this verse an echo of Christ's teaching (Luke xii. 19-21 ; xvi. 25).

**6. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one.** Although none of the Jews of the Dispersion may have been guilty of aiding in the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ, James lays this sin upon the Jews as a nation. **He doth not resist you.** The *present* tense makes this passage somewhat difficult to understand. We know Christ did not resist His murderers, for He went to His death "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isa. liii. 7 ; 1 Pet. ii. 23) ; so now also James means to say, He does not resist these Jews in running to *their* destruction. He does not stand in their way of filling up the measure of their wickedness (Matt. xxiii. 32), for the impending judgment is inevitable. In the last three verses *three* special sins of the Jews are condemned.

## 22. ENCOURAGEMENT TO PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.

**7-II.** Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged ; behold, the judge standeth before the doors. Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed which endure : ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful.

**7. Be patient therefore, brethren.** On *patience*, the

active grace of endurance, see notes on i. 3, 4. The Greek word here used means *longsuffering*, a self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. Literally, *long-tempered*, the opposite to our *short-tempered*. **Until the coming (presence) of the Lord.** With the exception of 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7; 2 Thess. ii. 9; Phil. i. 26, the Greek word *Parousia* is always used in the N. T. to denote the visible return of Jesus from Heaven, the *Second Advent* of Christ as opposed to His *First Advent*. **Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth.** So let the Christian patiently wait for the precious fruit of his labor, for which he hopes. **Being patient over it, until it (he) receive.** *It*, that is, the *fruit*, not *he*, the husbandman, nor *it*, the earth. **The early and latter rain.** The early rain comes after the sowing in fall, the latter rain just before the ripening in spring.

8. **Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts.** Only hearts strong and steadfast can endure wrong patiently, with longsuffering. It is God indeed who makes firm and strengthens the heart (1 Pet. v. 10), who stablishes the heart unblamable in holiness before God at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints (1 Thess. iii. 13), but he who has been regenerated must co-operate with God and surrender himself to the love and Spirit of God working in him (Phil. ii. 12, 13). **For the coming (presence) of the Lord is at hand.** (See notes on last verse.) James, without fixing any definite time, looked upon the Second Advent of Christ as very near. He beholds "the Judge standing before the doors" (v. 9). With reference to the *time* of the *Parousia*, God the Father has reserved it to Himself alone to determine the day and the hour of the return of the Son of man (Matt. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32). Those who speak of an "error" on the part of Jesus and His Apostles, in teaching the



nearness of the Second Advent, altogether misconceive the nature of Biblical prophecy, which, so far as it regards its fulfilment, always remains dependent on the historical development. In this development, the relation of man to the kingdom of God forms an essential factor, in conformity with which the Father, who guides this development, alone determines the time and the hour. In a certain sense there was a coming of Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the beginning of judgment upon Israel, but this was but a type of Christ's final coming in His own glorified person, with His holy Angels (Matt. xvi. 27; Mark viii. 38).

9. **Murmur not, brethren, one against another.** The reference is to the conduct of Christians towards each other in time of affliction or oppression. **That ye be not judged.** "That ye fall not under judgment" (v. 12). **Behold, the judge standeth before the doors.** This strengthens the warning, as it points to the nearness of the judgment. The Judge is Christ.

10. **Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets.** James now cites examples of patience in suffering to encourage them. Most of the prophets endured persecution with patience, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel being pre-eminent as patterns of endurance. **Who spake in the name of the Lord.** James, as well as his readers, believed that the O. T. came from God, and that the prophets delivered a message given to them by God.

11. **Behold, we call them blessed which endured.** (See notes on i. 12.) For God will surely reward them (Matt. v. 12). Another reason why they should endure *patiently*. **Ye have heard of the patience (endurance) of Job.** On *patience* see notes on i. 3, 4. Job displayed his patience not only in his afflictions, but especially in his persistent

trust in God (Job i. 21), as shown by his replies to his friends (Job ii. 10; xiii. 15; xvi. 19, 20; xix. 25-27). **And have seen the end of the Lord.** This evidently refers to the end of God's providential dealings with Job, his final prosperity, and the declaration of his integrity, and not to the death and sufferings of Christ, as maintained by Augustine, Bede, Wetstein, Lange, Bassett, and others. From the end which the Lord gave to Job (xlii. 7-17), you see **how that the Lord is full of pity.** The Greek word for *full of pity* is found in no other Greek writer save Hermas, who evidently takes it from James. It means *sympathetic*, almost the same as the *tenderhearted* of Eph. iv. 32; 1 Pet. iii. 8. **And merciful.** Mercy is God's free love to man from the point of view of man's need and helplessness. God pities us on account of our wretchedness—on account of the *misery* of sin.

### 23. WARNING AGAINST SWEARING.

12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath : but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay ; that ye fall not under judgement.

12. **But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath.** An echo of our Saviour's words (Matt. v. 34-37). James wants his exhortation against swearing especially to be taken to heart. **But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.** He refers here to the needless and heedless swearing in ordinary conversation, a practice so common in ancient times, and of which so many ill-bred persons of modern times are guilty. The margin of R. V. translates *let yours be the yea, yea, and the nay, nay.* **That ye fall not under judgement.** At the time of judgment when men are to be judged by the Gospel (ii. 12). "That the condemnation does not extend to the solemn

judicial use of oaths we see in the facts (1) that our Lord answered when questioned as on oath by Caiaphas (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64), and (2) that St. Paul at times used modes of expression which are essentially of the nature of an oath (2 Cor. i. 23; Rom. i. 9; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 18) " (PLUMPTRE). There is nothing wrong or sinful in a solemn judicial oath, if the truth cannot otherwise be ascertained.

#### 24. GENERAL EXHORTATIONS.

13-18. Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

13. **Is any among you suffering?** Instead of murmuring (v. 7), or of breaking out in oaths (v. 12), **let him pray.** Trouble, distress, affliction, are often veils beneath which the love of God conceals itself. Suffering may overtake the believer in the midst of, and as an aid to, the work of sanctification. Sufferings, however, serve not only to purify but also to edify. They bring us into more intimate communion with God—for they teach us to pray. On *prayer* see notes on i. 6. **Is any cheerful? let him sing praise.** (Compare Eph. v. 19.)

14. **Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church.** Let him call the *presbyters* of the congregation to which he belongs. The term *elder* was an official title, taken from the Synagogue, given to the leaders of the local Christian church, to those "that labored . . . and were over" the congregation (1 Thess.

v. 12), "who had the rule . . . and watched in behalf of souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). That they did not differ in Apostolic times from the *bishops* or overseers, is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately in Acts xx. 17, 28, and in Tit. i. 5, 7, and further, the duty of *presbyters* or elders is specifically described as being that of *oversight* (1 Pet. v. 1, 2). Only two kinds of church officers are recognized in the N. T., presbyters, or bishops, and deacons (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8). The word *presbyter* denotes the *dignity* of the office and comes from the Jewish Synagogue, the title *bishop* denotes the function of *oversight* and was borrowed from Greek institutions. **And let them pray.** This was the special object for which the presbyters were to come to him. **Over him.** Not simply *for him*, in his behalf, but "bending over," or "stretching their hands over." **Anointing** (*having anointed*) **him with oil in the name of the Lord.** In a firm and confident trust in Christ, for all cures could only be wrought in the name of Jesus Christ (Mark xvi. 17; Acts iii. 6; iv. 10; especially Acts iii. 16). Anointing the sick with oil was customary in the East for the refreshing, strengthening, and healing of the body. Here the anointing is to be accompanied by a miraculous healing in answer to prayer. This command of James to anoint the sick takes us back to the earliest age of the Church, and is a mark of the very early date of this Epistle. In Mark vi. 13 we also read that the twelve, when out on their mission, "anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." Whether there is any connection between this anointing with oil and Christ's promise of healing, by the laying on of hands (Mark xvi. 18), we cannot positively determine. Paul had this gift of healing (Acts xxviii. 8, 9), and such gifts were bestowed upon believers in Apostolic times by

the Spirit according to the will of God (1 Cor. xii. 9, 11, 28). It was not, in either case, the laying on of hands in itself, or the anointing of the sick with oil, that saved, but James ascribes the cure to *the prayer of faith* (v. 15). They were to use ordinary medicine, but the prayer of faith will bring about a miraculous cure.<sup>1</sup>

**15. And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick.** The prayer that proceeds from faith. (See notes on i. 6.) The sick man is also supposed to have faith in Christ and praying. The effect of the prayer is that the sick man *will recover* (shall save), stated more specifically

<sup>1</sup> This anointing of the sick, with accompanying prayer, was continued in the Eastern and Western Churches, even after the miraculous gifts given in the Apostolic Church had ceased. This custom, with a view to the *restoration of health*, is still practised in the Greek Church, and may be used in any illness, but there is nothing throughout the whole office which suggests or implies that it should be administered only to persons in imminent danger of death. Very interesting is the history of the development of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on this point. As is well known, the Roman Church appeals especially to this verse (besides Mark vi. 13; xvi. 17) for the support of her doctrine of the Sacrament of *Extreme Unction*. She lays special stress on the latter part of James v. 15, "And if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him," and connects this promise with the rite of Extreme Unction, for the spiritual comfort of the dying. But the facts are these. "There is no evidence, during the first eight centuries, of the anointing of the sick being deferred, as having only a spiritual efficacy, to the point of death, except the custom of an obscure sect of the Gnostics (the Heracleonites), as described by Epiphanius" (MAYOR). During the first centuries of the Church this anointing of the sick was not confined to the clergy; it was frequently performed by the sick man or by his friends. It was not till A. D. 852 that the function of anointing is confined to the priest. "The restraint of the unction to the priest had momentous consequences. The original intention of it in relation to the *healing of the body* was practically forgotten, and the rite came to be regarded as part of a Christian's immediate preparation for death. Hence, in the 12th century, it acquired the name of the last unction, *Unctio Extrema* (Peter Lombard), i. e. as the *Catechism of Trent* asserts, the last of those which a man received from the Church. In the 13th century it was placed by the schoolmen among the seven rites to which they then limited the application of the term *sacrament*" (Smith and Cheetham, *Dict. of Christ. Antiquities*, Articles *Oil*, *Unction*).

in the words **and the Lord shall raise him up**, from his sick-bed (Mark i. 31). The Roman Catholic interpreters refer this to spiritual comfort. **And if he have committed sins**. Not as if James thought that possibly this man was not guilty of any sins and needed no forgiveness ("for in many things we all stumble," iii. 2), but rather "even if his sickness can be traced to certain particular sins," if he repents and confesses his sin (v. 16), **it shall be forgiven him**. This whole verse reminds us of the miracles of healing performed by our Saviour as recorded by the Evangelists, and it is to be noted, that the forgiveness of sins was also often named, as associated with the cure of bodily infirmities (Matt. ix. 2; Luke viii. 48; John v. 14; etc.). James is here speaking with reference to the miraculous power of healing then existing in the Church, through faith in the name of Christ (Acts iii. 6, 16; iv. 10). The *Order of Visitation of the Sick* in use in the Lutheran Church is based upon this passage of James,<sup>1</sup> and in her *Orders for Ministerial Acts* she provides also for an *Order for the Communion of the Sick*, as well as an *Order for the Commendation of the Dying* (*Church Book*, pp. 370-376).

16. **Confess therefore your sins one to another**, Christ lays down the principle that God will not forgive our trespasses if we do not forgive those who have injured us (Matt. vi. 15), and if we make no amends for the wrongs we have committed against our fellow-men (Matt. v. 24). James takes it for granted that in the case of the sick man there was such a confession of sin in the pres-

<sup>1</sup> The Rubrics provide that "when a church-member is taken sick, notice thereof shall be given to the minister, that he may aid the sick person, with the Word and Sacrament, as the case may require. This should not be delayed to the last extremity, but the minister should be called in time, that the sick person may be examined, instructed, and comforted while able fully to understand what is done." (See *Church Book*, p. 350.)

ence of the presbyters, especially of sins towards God, but *here* in this verse there is no reference to any formal confession of sin to a pastor or presbyter, much less to *auricular* confession as practised in the Church of Rome. A general rule is laid down for Christians. Individual believers ought to have such mutual confidence in each other, that, if they wrong each other, they should confess it to each other. **And pray one for another, that ye may be healed**, i. e. that ye may be saved, *receive the forgiveness of your sins*. Some would understand this literally, healed *of bodily diseases*, connecting closely with the miracle spoken of, and this interpretation seems to agree with the miraculous power of the prayer of Elijah cited in the next two verses, but the exhortation to *confess* is general, made not only for the sick, but the Jewish Christians in general, and for all. **The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working**, i. e. it worketh very effectually, for it is assumed that prayer is a power that works, which by its importunity and strong faith obtains an answer (Luke xi. 8, 9; xviii. 1-7). The great majority of expositors, however, wrongly regard the participle as qualifying *supplication*, in the sense of *earnest, urgent*, translating "the supplication of a righteous man, being earnest, availeth much." James is encouraging Christians to pray for one another.

17. **Elijah was a man of like passions (nature) with us.** James now illustrates the power of prayer by the example of Elijah. He was one of us, of like disposition and nature. **And he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months.** Literally, *he prayed with prayer*, a Hebrew idiom, intensive, designating the *earnestness* of the prayer. The history to which James refers is recorded

in 1 Kings xvii. 1—xviii. 46. There is no discrepancy here because no mention is made in the O. T. narrative of the twofold prayer of Elijah. It is implied in the narrative. How long this drouth lasted is not stated in the O. T., but it was well known by the Jews, for such a memorable event was one of the glorious deeds of God to which they ever referred. Christ refers to this narrative when He speaks of “the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months” (Luke iv. 25).

**18. And he prayed again ; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.** The reference is to 1 Kings xviii. 42. The references in the N. T. to this narrative only fill out more fully the history as given in the O. T. Some commentators see something mystical in this three and one-half years of suffering, as it corresponds to “a time, times, and an half” (Dan. xii. 7), “forty and two months” (Rev. xi. 2), “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev. xii. 6),—the half of a prophetic week. In Rev. xi. 6 it is also stated that “the two witnesses” “have the power to shut the heaven that it rain not” during “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev. xi. 3).

## 25. BE ACTIVE IN SAVING SOULS.

19, 20. My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him ; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

**19. My brethren, if any among you do err.** Another practical precept, James returning to the subject of *confession of sin* and *prayer* of verse 16. It matters not whether the wanderer goes astray of his own will or is led astray by others. **From the truth.** Which is in Christ



Jesus. **And one convert him.** All are to aid in bringing back backsliders to the faith, not simply the pastors or presbyters. The word *convert* is here used (in Greek) in its *active* sense as in Luke i. 16, 17 (*turn*) and in Acts xxvi. 18 (*turn*).

20. **Let him know.** The one who converts another. Westcott and Hort with some ancient authorities read *know ye*. The plural would call attention to a well-known fact as in i. 19,—that conversion leads to salvation. **That he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way.** James seeks to excite zeal in all believers for the conversion of the erring. God uses men as instruments in the work of saving souls. It is the duty of all to speak the Word of God in season to erring souls, but especially the privilege and duty of those to whom “the ministry of reconciliation” has been entrusted (2 Cor. v. 18–21). **Shall save a soul.** That is, the soul of him who is converted. **From death.** Spiritual and eternal death. **And shall cover a multitude of sins.** That is, the sins of the one who is converted. The Roman Catholic commentators generally understand the sins covered to be those of the person converting another, but to this there is no reference here. The saving of souls has, however, its own reward. Not only shall we be the means “of saving a soul from death,” but “there shall be joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke xv. 7, 10), and “they that be wise (*the teachers*) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan. xii. 3).

The abrupt close of this Epistle is most remarkable. The nearest approach is found in 1 John. This abruptness may be that of *emphasis*.

## EXCURSUS I.

*The Helvidian Theory.* The theory that the brethren of our Lord are the sons of Joseph and Mary, and therefore the younger brethren of Jesus, is exegetically upheld by the statements given by Matthew and Luke. Matt. i. 18, "When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, *before they came together* she was found with child of the Holy Ghost;" Matt. i. 24, 25, "And Joseph . . . took unto him his wife; and *knew her not till she had brought forth a son*;" Luke ii. 7, "And she brought forth her *first-born* son." There is but one true interpretation of these passages. Matthew goes into what may seem almost unnecessary detail in fixing a limit to the separation between husband and wife. It is here undoubtedly implied that, after the birth of Jesus, Joseph began his married life with Mary which up to this time had been expressly prohibited. Luke writing his Gospel many years after our Saviour's death, at a time when it was known whether Mary afterwards had given birth to other children or not, and in connection with frequent mention of the brethren of the Lord (viii. 19, 20), speaks very naturally of Jesus as "the first-born son" of Mary. The remarkable narrative of our Saviour's childhood (Luke ii. 41-51) can be understood also more clearly, if we suppose that Mary had several younger children to attend to, and as the main care would have been given to the latter, it is easy to see how natural it was for them not to become aware earlier of the absence of their oldest child Jesus.

The *first* objection against this theory is, that such a

view is opposed to the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, and that this latter doctrine has been the sentiment of the universal Church until comparatively recent times. But history shows that the idea of the *perpetual virginity* of Mary arose from a false notion of the superior sanctity of the unmarried life, based upon a one-sided interpretation of 1 Cor. vii. 1; Rev. xiv. 4, a teaching which has no authority in the Word of God (2 Tim. iv. 1-5). The consensus of belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary does not begin until long after all historical evidence had been lost. Epiphanius and Jerome, who respectively contended for the *half-brother* and *cousin* theory, had no more means of real historical knowledge than we ourselves. Tertullian (*died* A. D. 220), who lived nearly two centuries before either Epiphanius or Jerome, appears to assume as a matter of course that the Lord's brethren were the children of Joseph and Mary (*Adv. Marc.* IV. 19; *De Carue Christi*, 7; *De Monogamia*, 8), and speaks as if in his day no one had any other view, and although Tertullian was inclined strongly to asceticism, he does not regard himself as contradicting an established tradition when denying Mary's perpetual virginity.

Before the end of the fourth century there was no fixed, recognized tradition, though there was a growing feeling and sentiment in favor of Mary's perpetual virginity, which finally took a definite shape through the influence of the Athanasian expression "ever Virgin." Among the Latin Fathers the expression "semper virgo," *ever virgin*, came into use, whence also naturally the doctrine was accepted by Luther and the Lutheran Reformers without laying it down as a confessional article (*Concordia*, ed. by Mueller, 299, 679, 24). But the real facts show that not only is there no scriptural foundation for this doc-

trine, but there is also no foundation for this view in the tradition of the first three centuries. When we deal with the argument from tradition, we are not in search simply of sentiment and pious opinion, but of historical facts.

*The Cultus of the Virgin Mary.* It is very interesting, in this connection, to trace the history of the *worship* of the Blessed Virgin, and note the different stages by which the various doctrines included in this Cultus were developed. Every form of this worship has its origin, not in the Bible, not in the Creeds, not in the teachings of the Fathers of the first three centuries, but in the Apocryphal legends of the birth and death of the Virgin Mary. After the fourth century the doctrine of the *perpetual virginity* was not enough for the ascetic spirit of the age. Mary became the child of promise and of miracle like Isaac, but it was not until the twelfth century that the opinion became almost universal that she was preserved from *actual sin*, and by the fourteenth century the idea was suggested that Mary had also been free from *original sin*, but it was not until 1854 that the decree of her *Immaculate Conception*,—that she was conceived and born without original sin,—was passed by the Roman Church. The Roman Catholic Church now teaches that the Virgin Mary has been wholly exempt from all sin, original and actual, throughout her life and in her death. So likewise the ascetic spirit of the fourth century was not satisfied with the scriptural teaching of the miraculous conception of our Lord, but began to teach that His *birth* was also miraculous, that He came into the world without doing violence to the virginal and pure body of His mother, leaving her virginity entire. The doctrine of the *Assumption* of the Virgin, that at her death her body was translated into heaven, can also be traced to legends which had their origin among unbelievers and heretics, and did

not begin to creep into the Church until the sixth century, but which now has been ratified by the authority of both the Roman and the Greek Catholic Churches.

Another form of this first objection is, that the idea that Mary, the mother of our Saviour, had other children, is abhorrent to Christian sentiment. This objection is but a natural result of the false asceticism which exalted virginity at the expense of married life. Lightfoot calls attention to the comparison used by some of the Fathers between the conception and burial of our Lord. As after death His body was placed in a sepulchre wherein never man before was laid, so they held it seemed fitting that the womb consecrated by His presence should not thenceforth have borne any offspring of man. But this is not a question of sentiment but of fact.

A *second* objection raised against this theory is, that according to Scripture these brothers were not believers on Jesus (John vii. 5), but that Paul expressly calls James, the Lord's brother, an Apostle (Gal. i. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 7). But neither of these passages necessarily implies that James was one of the twelve, even if he is called an Apostle, for the term *Apostle* was not strictly confined to the twelve, being applied in the Acts not only to Paul, but also to Barnabas (Acts xiv. 4, 14), and Paul may even have used it of the wider circle of the disciples (1 Cor. xv. 7). In Gal. i. 19 the restrictive clause *save* may refer to the verb alone, implying that Paul saw no Apostle except Peter, but that he also saw James, the Lord's brother. The same usage of this restrictive phrase is found in the Greek of Matt. xii. 4; Luke iv. 27; John xvii. 12; Gal. ii. 16; Rev. ix. 4; xxi. 27.

A *third* objection is, if Mary had children of her own, Jesus would not when dying have recommended her to the care of John (John xix. 25-27). Lightfoot regards

this objection as fatal to the *brother* theory, and speaks of Mary "being consigned to the care of a stranger" (*Galatians*, p. 108). But John was no stranger in any sense. Jesus consigned His mother to His most intimate friend, the beloved disciple, the son of His mother's sister, Salome. We do not know all the circumstances of the case, but it is most probable (some would say positively certain) that the brethren of Jesus were not present at the crucifixion, while John was present. We can also infer from 1 Cor. ix. 5 that the brothers of Jesus were married men, and had households of their own, while from incidental notices it seems that John was unmarried and in a better social position than our Lord's brothers, and had a residence in Jerusalem (Mark i. 20; Luke viii. 3; John xix. 27; xviii. 15).

A *fourth* objection is, the brothers of Jesus act towards him as if he were a younger brother. This objection has little weight, and the facts at our command are too few to lay much stress upon this argument either way. Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-34; Luke viii. 20, 21; Mark iii. 20, 21; vi. 4; Matt. xiii. 55-57; John ii. 12; vii. 1-9, bear upon this point.

Many of our best modern scholars, such as Stier, Wieseler, De Wette, Neander, Lechler, Bleek, Credner, Meyer, Huther, Beyschlag, Mangold, Weiss, Alford, Schaff, Eadie, Gloag, Farrar, Major, and others, accept this theory that the brethren of Jesus were the sons of Mary and Joseph.

## EXCURSUS II.

*Luther on the Epistle of James.* Luther gives two reasons why he will not accept the genuineness of the Epistle of James: (1) because he thinks it is in conflict with Paul's fundamental doctrine of justification by faith; and (2) because it does not lay sufficient stress upon the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Spirit of Christ. In this discussion we must not forget, as Archdeacon Hare reminds us, that Luther "did not always weigh his words in jewellers' scales," and those writers who quote with such satisfaction Luther's graphic description of the Epistle of James as "eine rechte stroherne Epistel, . . . denn sie doch keine evangelische Art an ihr hat," too often totally misrepresent him, for they do not take into consideration the context of the statement. It is not our aim to defend Luther in his view of the Epistle, but justice demands that the truth be known. It is very interesting to study the writings of Luther and trace his statements concerning this Epistle as given (1) in his seventh Thesis against Eck (1519), (2) in his Babylonian Captivity (1520), (3) in his Postils, (4) in his preface to James (1522), (5) in his preface to the New Testament (1524), and (6) in his Table Talk. (See also Luther's preface to James as published in the *Weimar Bible*, St. Louis, 1877.) After giving a general summary of the Christian life, he concludes the preface of his first edition of the translation of the N. T. (1524) (which is, however, omitted in the later editions) in these words: "From all this you can rightly judge between all the books, and distinguish which are the best. For St. John's Gospel,

and St. Paul's Epistles, especially that to the Romans, and St. Peter's first Epistle, are the true marrow and kernel of all the books; which properly also might be the first, and each Christian should be counselled to read them first and most, and make them as common by daily reading as his daily bread, . . . briefly St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's first Epistle: *these are the books which show thee Christ, and teach all that is needful and blessed for thee to know, even if you never see or hear any other book, or any other doctrine.* Therefore is the Epistle St. James a right strawy Epistle compared with them, for it lacks all evangelical character." Again he says (also reprinted in the Weimar Bible of St. Louis, 1877): "I admire the Epistle of St. James, though it was rejected by the ancients, and still hold it as good, for this reason that it lays down no teaching of man, and presses home the law of God. Yet to express my own opinion, without prejudice to any one, I do not hold it to be the writing of any Apostle, for these reasons: (1) It directly contradicts St. Paul and all other Scripture in giving righteousness to works. . . . (2) It professes to teach Christian people, and yet in such a long instruction does not once notice the Passion, the Resurrection, and the spirit of Christ. The writer names Christ a few times, but he teaches nothing of Him, but speaks of general faith in God. For it is the office of a true Apostle to preach the Passion, Resurrection, and Office of Christ, and to lay the foundation of faith in the same . . . and with this, all true holy books agree, that they wholly preach and urge Christ. That too is the right touchstone whereby to criticise all books, whether they urge Christ or not, for all Scripture testifies of Christ. . . . That which does not teach Christ is still not Apostolic,





even if it were the teaching of St. Peter or St. Paul. Again that which preaches Christ, that were Apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod, preached it. . . . I therefore cannot place it among the true Chief-books, but I will forbid no one to place and regard it as he pleases; for there are many good sayings in it." In accordance with this general statement in the German (Lutheran) Bibles the Epistles to the Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelations are placed at the end of the translation for the reason, as Luther says: "These four have been regarded in former times in a different light."

The reader will notice that in the first paragraph a comparison is drawn between the Epistle of James and the writings of John, Paul, and Peter, and the test of comparison is its *evangelical* character (*Gospel versus Law*), and in this sense Luther sees very little of the pure Gospel in James. So likewise in the second paragraph quoted Luther uses the word "Apostolic" in the sense of Evangelical (Gospel). I will close this note with a few quotations. Westcott (*Canon of the N. T.* pp. 480-486) says: "Luther's judgments on the different books are given in detail in his prefaces. These are so full of life and so characteristic of the man, that they can never lose their interest; and as a whole they form an important chapter in the history of the Bible. His comments on the Apocrypha have singular vigor and personal appreciation of the value of the several books; nor does he show less freedom and boldness in dealing with the Antilegomena of the New Testament. For him there is a Gospel within the Gospel, a New Testament within the New Testament. . . . The freshness and power of Luther's judgments on the Bible, the living sense of fellowship with the spirit which animates them, the bold independence and self-assertion which separates them from all simply critical

conclusions, combined to limit their practical acceptance to individuals. Such judgments rest on no definite external evidence. They cannot be justified by the ordinary rule and measure of criticism or dogma. No Church could rest on a theory which makes private feeling the supreme authority as to doctrine and the source of doctrine. As a natural consequence the later Lutherans abandoned the teaching of their great master on the written word. For a time the disputed books of the N. T. were distinguished from the remainder; but in the early part of the seventeenth century this difference was looked upon as wholly belonging to the past." Farrar (*Messages of the Books*, p. 412) remarks: "It is impossible not to admire the noble independence of a spirit which was free and bold because it was living and because it felt the Spirit of God as a fresh power. But Luther's condemnation of the Epistle rose from his not possessing the right clue to its comprehension."

## COLLECT.

O Almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Corner-stone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made a holy Temple acceptable unto thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*



## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

TO THE

### FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

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1. *The Author of the Epistle.* The author describes himself as "an Apostle of Jesus Christ" (i. 1), and it has been the universal belief of the Christian Church of all ages, that the writer of the Epistle was Simon Peter, one of the twelve. The life of Peter as given in the Gospels is familiar to all. At first a disciple of John the Baptist, he was brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew (John i. 41, 42). He, as well as the rest of the twelve, was gradually prepared for his work, receiving his first call at the beginning of the second year of our Lord's ministry (Matt. iv. 18-22; Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 1-11), and his formal call, a few months later, in midsummer (Mark iii. 13-19; Luke vi. 12-16). Christ was especially drawn to Peter, for He saw in him a man with capabilities of character fitted to hold the place of leader among the Apostles, in the trying times that should follow after His own death. From the very beginning Peter's enthusiasm and impetuosity led him to be a natural leader among the Apostles, and he soon acted as spokesman for them. When some at the close of the second year of our Lord's ministry threatened to desert Him, it was Peter who made answer in behalf of the twelve, "Lord, to whom shall we go? . . . We know that thou art the Holy One of God" (John vi. 68, 69). A few months later, at

Cæsarea Philippi, in answer to Christ's question to the twelve, "But who say ye that I am?" Peter, in the name of the twelve, but with a special confidence of personal conviction, made that memorable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16), which gained for him the special approbation of our Lord. As an answer came those gracious words of our Saviour, which have been the occasion of endless controversies between Romish and Protestant theologians, "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jonah: . . . And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter (*Petros*), and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 17-19). (See *Excursus* I. at the close of this Epistle.) In Peter, Jesus saw that one among the Apostles whose activity would give the Church its greatest stability and consistency, and he was one of the most highly favored of the twelve, being privileged along with James and John to be the only witnesses of the healing of the daughter of Jairus (Mark v. 37), of the Transfiguration (Mark ix. 2), and of the agony in Gethsemane (Mark xiv. 33). Like many impulsive men, there was in him a rashness and forwardness bordering upon presumption, and he did not stand the test at the hour of trial and danger. He represents, more completely perhaps than any in the N. T., the weakness of the natural and the strength of the spiritual man. Thrice, each time with greater vehemence, he denied his Lord in the hall of Caiaphas, but it needed only the glance of his Saviour's eye to bring him to himself. Although he had sinned deeply, he repented sincerely. On the morning of the resurrection, he who first among the Apostles needed the comfort was the first who received it, and the Lord as an assurance of forgiveness honored Peter with a special

appearance (Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5); and as Peter had thrice denied Him, so Jesus by His thrice repeated question, "Lovest thou Me?" restored him fully as the leader of the Apostolic band, and gave him the commission to feed His sheep (John xxi. 15-17).

In the first twelve chapters of the Acts, Peter stands forth as the recognized leader of the Apostles. In accordance with the position assigned to him by Christ, it was Peter who suggests the choice of a twelfth Apostle to succeed Judas (Acts i. 16-22), it was his sermon on the day of Pentecost which added 3,000 souls to the Church (Acts ii. 41), and he also was permitted to preach the *first* sermon to the Gentiles and to receive them into the Church (Acts x. 1-48). In fact it is Peter who almost on all occasions takes the lead,—and we are justified in recognizing him as the leader of the twelve during the first fifteen years after the founding of the Church, before Paul began his successful career, and before James became the head of the church at Jerusalem. In the persecution raised by Herod Agrippa (A. D. 44), in which James the brother of John was killed (Acts xii. 2), Peter was cast into prison, from which he was miraculously released (Acts xii. 3-17), and for a time quitted Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Six years later (A. D. 50) we find Peter again in Jerusalem in attendance at the Council, but we find that Peter did not exercise the power which Romanists would attach to the *primacy* of Peter, for he neither presided at the Council, nor summoned it, nor dismissed it, and it was James who presided, and who passed final judgment (Acts xv. 13-21). At this council it was also decided

<sup>1</sup> Acts xii. 17, "And he (Peter) departed, and went to another place." There is no evidence whatever for the view that Peter at this time went to Rome and there founded the Christian Church to which Paul afterwards wrote his letter. The Epistle to the Romans is decidedly opposed to any such legend.

that Paul should work among the Gentiles and Peter chiefly among the Jews (Gal. ii. 7-9). Shortly after took place that memorable meeting when, through an error of judgment, Peter brought upon himself the merited reproof of Paul (Gal. ii. 11-14). Paul grounds his reproof upon the inconsistencies of Peter, not upon his Judaizing tendencies. In this narrative we must admire Peter's singular humility in submitting to public reproof, as much as the earnestness and wisdom displayed by Paul. From 1 Cor. i. 12 we infer that there were some Jewish converts in the church at Corinth, of a Judaizing character, who wished to impose the observance of the Mosaic law on the Gentiles, and who falsely regarded Peter as their leader, but Peter distinctly repudiates the idea that the Gentiles should be compelled to keep the Mosaic law (Acts xv. 10),<sup>1</sup> and there is no reason to question his entire harmony at all times with the decision of the Apostolic Council (Acts xv. 23-29).

We have no record of Peter's missionary journeys, but from his first Epistle we learn that he resided some time at Babylon, the ancient capital of the East (1 Pet. v. 13), which at this time, and for several centuries later, was a chief seat of Jewish culture, and it was probably through the influence of the labors of Peter in the East that the great Christian schools at Edessa and Nisibis were finally established. It is most likely that he visited Corinth, and it may be considered a settled point that he did not visit Rome before the last year of his life.<sup>2</sup> The Roman tradition of Peter's twenty years' episcopate in Rome cannot

<sup>1</sup> It is equally true, however, that all the Apostles, including Barnabas and Paul, acknowledged allegiance to the Mosaic law, and considered it prudent for *Jews* to keep it (Acts xviii. 18-21; xx. 16; especially xxi. 18-24), for the sake of not giving offence to weak brethren.

<sup>2</sup> Some writers of great learning (like Spanheim, DeWette, Baur, Zeller, Schwegler, Hase, Holtzmann, Lipsius, Winer, Pfeiderer, Hausrath, David-

be traced beyond the fourth century, and arose from chronological miscalculations. It is most likely that Peter reached Rome about A. D. 64, and that he perished in the great Neronian persecution which began in the month of July in that year. A credible tradition informs us that at his own request he was crucified with his head downwards.<sup>1</sup>

2. *The Authenticity of the First Epistle of Peter.* That the author of this Epistle was Peter the Apostle is universally acknowledged. The *external* evidence is of the strongest kind. Hardly any writing of the N. T. is more frequently quoted by the Early Fathers. The *internal* evidence is equally strong. Everywhere we find references in the Epistle showing that the writer had been

son) deny that Peter was ever at Rome, and Ellendorf, a liberal Roman Catholic, maintains that Peter's residence at Rome can never be proved,—“Peter may have been at Rome ; it is possible that he was there about the year 65 or 66. But it is nothing more than possible, and the opposite is equally likely, or even more likely.” On the other hand the fact of Peter's residence at Rome is regarded as sufficiently established by the testimony of the Early Fathers by such scholars as Lardner, Ewald, Credner, Olshausen, Gieseler, Huther, Keil, Wieseler, Bleek, Mangold, Schaff, Delitzsch, Rothe, Hilgenfeld, Weiss, Farrar, Cook, Lightfoot, Gloag, Plumptre, and the Roman Catholic theologians generally. SCHAFF : “The time of Peter's arrival in Rome, and the length of his residence there, cannot possibly be ascertained. The silence of the Acts and of Paul's Epistles allows him only a short period of labor there after 63. The Roman tradition of a twenty or twenty-five years' episcopate of Peter in Rome is unquestionably a colossal chronological mistake. Nor can we fix the year of his martyrdom, except that it must have taken place after July, 64, when the Neronian persecution broke out. It is variously assigned to every year between 64 and 69.” *Church History*, vol. I, p. 252.

<sup>1</sup> For the life of Peter see : Green (S. G.), *The Apostle Peter, his Life and Letters*, London, Plumptre ; *Introd. to Comm. on Epistles of Peter*, pp. 1-59 ; Cook, in *Smith's Bible Dict.* ; Gloag, *Introd. to Catholic Epistles*, Dissertation I ; *Peter's Residence in Rome*, pp. 144-160 ; Ellendorf, *Ist Petrus in Rom und Bischof der röm. Gemeinde gewesen ?* 1841. Translated in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1858 ; Taylor, *Peter the Apostle*, 1879 ; Lightfoot, *Comm. on Galatians*, Dissertation III, *St. Paul and the Thrice*, pp. 129-212 ; Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 60-66, 592, 593.



one of the personal followers of our Lord. Many undesigned coincidences can also be traced between this Epistle and the speeches of Peter recorded in the Acts. The *canonicity* of the Epistle has therefore been admitted from the earliest times, and it is already found in the Peshito, the old Latin, and all the most ancient versions.

3. *The Relation of the Epistle to that of James and to the Pauline Epistles.* We have already seen that Peter was evidently familiar with the Epistle of James and probably made use of it. The Epistle also gives most unmistakable evidence, not only that Peter was in perfect accord with the doctrinal system of Paul, but there can scarcely be any reasonable doubt that when Peter wrote he was perfectly familiar with the contents of the Epistles to the Romans and to the Ephesians.<sup>1</sup>

4. *The Persons Addressed.* This letter is written to the elect saints (i. 1, 5, 8; ii. 9), "sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (i. 1), countries lying in Asia Minor. It was addressed to the Christians residing in those very countries in which Paul and his companions had labored during his second and third missionary journeys, although we have no scriptural information that Paul ever set his foot in the countries of Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. That there were many Jewish Christians among them we can plainly infer from the fact that they are called "sojourners of the Dispersion" (i. 1), and that the Epistle contains so many quotations from and references to the O. T. (i. 16, 24, 25; ii. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 22-24; iii. 10-12, 13; iv. 8; v. 5, 7). But it is equally clear that there were many Gentiles among these Christian churches, as can also be

<sup>1</sup> There are at least 34 parallelisms between this Epistle and Romans, and 14 between it and Ephesians. Long lists of such references are given by commentators, and can easily be verified with a good Reference Bible.

clearly deduced from i. 14, 18; ii. 10; iii. 6; iv. 3. And all this is in perfect harmony with what we might expect in the congregations founded by Paul during his labors from 50 to 58 A. D.

5. *The Time and Place of the Writing of this Epistle.* The precise date of the letter is uncertain. Peter may have written it shortly after the arrival of Mark at Babylon, in the fall of A. D. 63, or in the spring of A. D. 64, thus leaving still nearly a year for his journey to Rome, if we accept the date of his crucifixion as early as the fall of 64. From v. 13 we learn that the letter was written at Babylon. There is no reason whatever for taking this as a metaphorical designation of Rome, as is done by so many moderns.<sup>1</sup> It has well been said, "A doctrinal epistle is not an apocalypse." The residence of Peter in Babylon on the Euphrates was on every account likely and appropriate. Mesopotamia was the centre of a large Jewish population. No field could be more inviting to the Apostle of the Circumcision. This is the view adopted by Calovius, Gerhard, Bengel, Neander, Wieseler, Guericke, Steiger, Bleek, Lange, Fronmüller, Huther, Keil, Alford, Wordsworth, and others.

6. *The Aim of the Epistle.* The aim is definitely stated by the Apostle as being an exhortation that they should "stand fast in the true grace of God" (v. 12), "and set their hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (i. 13), in the midst of the fiery trials which had come upon them (i. 6, 7; ii. 12, 20, 21; iii. 17; iv. 12). The whole Epistle glorifies and testifies to the grace of God, and consists in an exhortation to continue in that grace.

<sup>1</sup> So Jerome, Bede, Luther, Lardner, Olshausen, Wiesinger, Hofmann, Hengstenberg, Ewald, Thiersch, Schaff, Davidson, Salmon, Cook, Farrar, and of course all Roman Catholic commentators,

7. *The Style and Character of the Epistle.* The Epistle has an unmistakable and distinctive character of its own suited to its hortatory design. Its style is fervid and affectionate; practical rather than doctrinal or dialectical. ALFORD: "There is no Epistle in the sacred Canon, the language and spirit of which come more directly home to the personal trials and wants and weaknesses of the Christian life. Its affectionate warnings and strong consolation have ever been treasured up close to the hearts of the weary and heavy-laden but onward-pressing servants of God. . . . The entire Epistle is the following out of our Lord's command to its writer, 'Do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 32)."

8. *The Contents of the Epistle.* The practical nature of the Epistle can best be shown by the following analysis:

I. 1 Peter i. 1-12. *Introduction.*

1. Address and Greeting (i. 1, 2).
2. Thanksgiving for the Hope of Salvation (i. 3-5).
3. Joy overcometh all Trial (i. 6-9).
4. The Greatness of the Mystery of Salvation (i. 10-12).

II. 1 Peter i. 13-ii. 10. *Exhortations based on the Hope of Salvation.*

5. Exhortation to Holiness (i. 13-16).
6. Exhortation to Godly Fear (i. 17-21).
7. Exhortation to Brotherly Love (i. 22-25).
8. Exhortation to Spiritual Growth (ii. 1-10).

III. 1 Peter ii. 11-iv. 6. *Exhortations based on the Position of Christians in this World.*

9. Exhortation to Abstain from Fleshly Lusts (ii. 11, 12).
10. Exhortation to be Good Citizens (ii. 13-17).

11. Exhortation to Believing Servants (ii. 18-25).
  12. Exhortation to Christian Wives (iii. 1-6).
  13. Exhortation to Christian Husbands (iii. 7).
  14. General Exhortations to all (iii. 8-17).
  15. Enforced by the Sufferings and Exaltation of Christ (iii. 18-22).
  16. Exhortation unto Holiness of Life (iv. 1-6).
- IV. 1 Peter iv. 7-v. 11. *Exhortations referring to Church Life.*
17. Exhortations suggested by the Impending Judgment (iv. 7-11).
  18. Exhortations to Endure Persecution (iv. 12-19).
  19. Exhortation to the Presbyters (v. 1-4).
  20. General Exhortations to all (v. 5-11).
- V. 1 Peter v. 12-14. *Conclusion.*
21. Salutation and Benediction (v. 12-14).
9. *Select Literature.* In addition to the literature given on the General Epistles in general, pp. vii, viii, we would call attention to the following:
- Johnstone, *First Epistle of Peter*, Edinburgh, 1888.
- Keil, *Die Briefe des Petrus und Judas*, 1883.
- Kuhl, *Petrusbriefe und Judas*, 1887 (the fifth improved edition of Huther-Meyer).
- Leighton, *First Epistle of Peter*; many editions.
- Lillie, *Lectures on First and Second Peter*, 1873.
- Luther, *Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 1859, translated by Gillett.
- Steiger, *On 1 Peter*, 1832. In English, 1836.
- Usteri, *Kommentar über 1 Petrusbriefe*, 1887-89.
- The three best commentaries on the Greek text of the First Epistle of Peter are by *Huther*, *Fronmüller*, and *Keil*, and the three best commentaries on the English text are by *Plumptre*, *Cook*, and *Lillie*.



# THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### I. ADDRESS AND GREETING.

1, 2. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

1. **Peter.** The writer of this Epistle was Peter, one of the twelve Apostles. His original name was Simon or Symeon (Acts xv. 14). Peter is a Greek word meaning *Rock*, the same as the Aramaic *Cephas*. For the *life* of Peter and the *date* of the Epistle, see Introduction. **An apostle of Jesus Christ.** The word Apostle originally means *sent forth*, but as referring to the twelve has a special signification. Peter had all the necessary qualifications for this office, (1) having received a direct call, and having been associated with Christ from the beginning (Acts i. 21); (2) having been an eye-witness of the resurrection (Acts i. 22); (3) having authority to preach everywhere (Luke xxiv. 47, 48; Acts i. 8); (4) possessing the powers of an Apostle (2 Cor. xii. 12). **To the elect.** Christians are called *the elect* inasmuch as God has *chosen* them out of the kingdom of the world to be His own. The *election* itself on God's part is simply the outcome of free love, excludes all claims of merit (Rom. ix. 11),

and has its origin in grace alone (Rom. xi. 5). The *elect* are the personal objects of election, those who by faith have renounced all merit (Rom. xi. 7), and have entered upon that state of reconciliation and grace intended for them, and in whom God's saving purpose of free love is realized (Rom. ix. 11). **Who are sojourners of the Dispersion.** The word *sojourners* is here not to be taken in its metaphorical sense, *strangers on earth*, as in ii. 11, but in its literal sense. The reference here is especially to Christian Jews, although the Gentile element may have largely predominated (i. 14, 18, 20; ii. 10; iii. 6; iv. 3, 4). The word *Dispersion* was used to designate the Jews living in Gentile lands, outside of Palestine. **In Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.** Peter names five provinces of Asia Minor in the order in which they would arise to one writing from the East.

2. **According to the foreknowledge of God.** This states the *rule* or standard according to which the believer's election takes place. The word *foreknowledge* is not to be taken in the sense of *predestination* or foreordination, but in its true sense of *prescience*. Peter also uses the word in Acts ii. 23, where we must distinguish between the "determinate counsel" of God that Jesus should be delivered up, and the *foreknowledge* that this would really take place. The *verb* is also used by Peter in i. 20 in the same sense. (1) The *origin* of the election of believers is the purely gratuitous grace of God (Rom. xi. 6); (2) the determining *ground* or the meritorious cause of our election lies in Christ (Eph. i. 4); (3) the *rule* or standard according to which it takes place is here stated as being *the foreknowledge* of God; (4) the time of this election is given by Paul in Eph. i. 4 as taking place in Christ "before the foundation of the world," "from the beginning" (2 Thess. ii. 13). The election

and the predestination of the believer are coincident in time, *predestination* being the mode in which this *election* takes place (Eph. i. 4, 5). There is no conflict when it is here stated by Peter that the rule or standard according to which *election* takes place is the *foreknowledge* of God, and when, on the other hand, Paul makes the rule or standard of *predestination* "the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. i. 5), "the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. i. 11), for the divine decree of Predestination or Election is based (1) upon the eternal *purpose* of God in Christ Jesus (Eph. iii. 11), and (2) upon His *foreknowledge*, "for whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii. 29). The *purpose* of God is, that in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. iii. 11), all who believe in Him (Eph. i. 13; iii. 12) shall be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). But God does not deal in any arbitrary way,—it is an election through predestination *according to the foreknowledge of God*,—a foreknowledge of *what* is not stated here or elsewhere in the N. T., but it is clearly implied in Scripture,—a foreknowledge that the grace of God offered in Christ Jesus through the call (Rom. viii. 28; 2 Tim. i. 9), would not be rejected. It is arbitrary, and in the interest of a preconceived dogmatic system, to maintain that in this foreknowledge of God there can be no reference whatever to the faith of believers,—but we must also, on the other hand, carefully guard against the error of supposing that our foreseen faith moved God to predestine us to salvation. So far from *our faith* being the *ground* of our predestination, it is here definitely stated that faith is the *result* of our election, *elect unto obedience*, which obedience most assuredly includes faith in Christ ("the obedience of faith," Rom. i. 5). But this is a mystery which we need not attempt to fathom, for it is



incomprehensible by our finite minds. **The Father.** The doctrine of the Trinity is very fully developed by Peter in this Epistle. Even in this first chapter he refers to the Father in verses 2, 3, 15, 17, 21; to Christ in verses 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 13, 19; to the Holy Ghost in verses 2, 11, 12, 23. **In sanctification of the Spirit.** This states the *means by which* or *the sphere in which* the election to eternal salvation which has taken place is to be realized. So also 2 Thess. ii. 13. This *holiness* is the work of the Holy Spirit. In Eph. i. 4 Paul makes the additional statement that God “chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy* and without blemish before Him.” **Unto obedience.** This describes the *end* towards which the election of the believer is directed. This obedience includes faith in Christ (“the obedience of faith” Rom. i. 5), and the moral obedience which springs from faith (“obedience to the truth,” i. 22). **And sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.** This is the same blood of sprinkling referred to in Heb. xii. 24, and spoken of by John, as “cleansing us from all sin” (1 John i. 7). In Christ we are to have continual forgiveness of sins. **Grace to you and peace.** By grace is meant God’s free love to man; peace is the state of blessedness which results from the reception of this grace. **Be multiplied.** LUTHER: “It is as though Peter had said, ye have now peace and grace, but yet not in perfection; therefore must ye continue to increase in them till the Old Adam die.” (See notes on James i. 2.)

## 2. THANKSGIVING FOR THE HOPE OF A HEAVENLY INHERITANCE AND OF SALVATION.

3-5. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible,

and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

**3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul opens 2 Corinthians (i. 3) and Ephesians (i. 3) with this same glorious ascription of praise to God. **Who according to his great mercy begat us again.** Peter gives this as the reason why God is to be praised. *Mercy* is that special form of the free grace of God which pities the *misery* and wretchedness of sinful man. It is God the Father who is the author of our regeneration (*here* and James i. 18); the personal agent who brings about the new birth is the Holy Spirit (John iii. 5); the audible instrument which God uses is the Word (James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23); the visible instrument or channel is Baptism (1 Pet. iii. 21; John iii. 5; Tit. iii. 5); the procuring cause of it, the Resurrection of Christ (*here* and Col. ii. 12), including, of course, His sufferings and death. (See notes on James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23.) **Unto a living hope.** This defines more exactly the nature of the regeneration of which Peter here speaks. It is not so much what we theologically call regeneration *to faith*, but rather a regeneration *to hope*. We may say the first is brought about by the preaching of the Gospel in general, and the last by the preaching of the fact of the resurrection of Christ. *Hope* here denotes the subjective, inward condition of the soul which makes the heart happy and joyful, and which waits in triumph for the certain fulfilment of the promises of God (Rom. v. 5). **By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.** The very existence of Christian hope is here traced to the resurrection of Christ, for "if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17).

**4. Unto an inheritance.** This clause also depends on

the verb *begat* and explains more fully the substance and object of the believer's hope. This *inheritance* is eternal life in the completed kingdom of God, "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," spoken of in the next verse. **Incorruptible.** The glorious nature of this heavenly inheritance is now stated and defined by three attributes. Each word is emphatic. This inheritance is absolutely *imperishable*, subject to no change, loss, or destruction, as silver and gold (i. 7, 18). **And undefiled.** As our Saviour is holy, *undefiled*, separated from sinners (Heb. vii. 26), so this inheritance is pure, free from every taint of sin, and no impure person can have a share in it (Rev. xxi. 27). **And that fadeth not away.** This attribute refers to the imperishable beauty of the inheritance. **Reserved in heaven for you.** Peter now assures his readers that this inheritance is intended for them, secure, but at the same time still concealed. This inheritance is "incorruptible" in its *essence*, "undefiled" in its *purity*, "unfading" and perpetual in its *beauty* and glory, heavenly and spiritual ("reserved in heaven") in its *character*.

5. **Who by the power of God are guarded.** This gives the reason of the hope that believers have of obtaining this inheritance. Believers are protected and kept safe, as in a garrison, *by the power of God*. **Through faith.** By faith salvation is received (Eph. ii. 8), and *through faith* salvation is kept. In both cases it is the gift and power of God. **Unto a salvation.** This salvation is eternal life, the complete salvation obtained for believers by the atoning work of Christ, consisting (1) *negatively*, of a full and eternal deliverance from sin, death, and wrath (Rom. ii. 5, 8, 9), and (2) *positively*, "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. ii. 10). **Ready to be revealed.** This salvation, already in existence, will not be bestowed until **in the last time**. By

this last expression Peter means the time beginning with the return of Christ, the last times of the present stage of this world.

### 3. THE JOY OF SALVATION OVERCOMETH ALL TRIALS OF FAITH.

6-9. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations, that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ : whom not having seen ye love ; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

6. **Wherein ye greatly rejoice.** *Wherein*, i. e. that by the power of God you are kept through faith unto salvation, ye *now* rejoice over your future salvation. **Though now for a little while, if need be.** If such be the will of God. Trials are not sent without a purpose (2 Cor. iv. 17). **Ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations** (*trials*). For "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). (See notes on James i. 2.)

7. **That the proof of your faith.** This designates the end or *aim* of the trials. (See notes on James i. 3.) **Being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire.** It is the *trial* of faith which is here said to be more precious than gold, even the *purest* gold (*though it is proved by fire*), for gold *perisheth* ; but faith, the more it is tried, does not only become the purer, but the stronger and more enduring, and instead of perishing, attains its end, "even the salvation of your souls" (i. 9). As gold receives a twofold trial, one when it is purified from dross and another when it is assayed, so faith has its double trial, one to purify it, and one to test or *prove*

it, and it is suffering itself which accomplishes this double purpose. **Might be found unto praise and glory and honour.** This is the great aim of all the trials which in the Providence of God come upon us. The reward of grace which true believers shall receive **at the revelation of Jesus Christ** consists (1) of the *praise* of their fidelity of faith (Matt. xxv. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Rom. ii. 7, 10; 2 Thess. i. 5); (2) of the *glory*, which the Father has given to Christ (i. 11, 21; Acts iii. 13), and which He will communicate to all that are His (iv. 13; v. 1; iv. 14); (3) of the *honor* which Christ has promised to His faithful servants (John xii. 26; Rev. iii. 21; xxii. 4). (After Fronmüller.)

8. **Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing.** In verse 3 the Apostle calls our attention to the *hope* of the believer, and here he speaks of *love* and *faith*. Our hope centres in Christ, "the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27), Him we love, and on Him we believe. There is a distinction between faith, love, and hope. Faith hangs on the word of promise, love on that God who gives, and hope on the promised inheritance. Faith receives and has, love gives, hope waits. Faith makes the heart firm, love softens it, hope expands it. Faith holds fast to what it has received, love gives up what it has received, hope triumphs over what is wanting. **Ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable.** The inner joy of the believer who has found peace with God and rejoices in the forgiveness of sins, who by the power of God is living and moving in the blessed fulness of the new life in Christ, is *unspeakable*, it cannot be expressed in words, nor exhausted by words. **And full of glory,—glorified.** So great is this joy, that even now, while we are still in the body, it is invested with glory.

9. **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation**

**of your souls.** This gives the reason of their great joy. Salvation was in one sense already theirs, but Peter here refers to the completed salvation of which they should become partakers at Christ's Second Advent.

#### 4. THE GREATNESS OF THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION.

10-12. Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that *should come* unto you : searching what *time* or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven ; which things angels desire to look into.

**10. Concerning which salvation.** The salvation of believers just spoken of, procured by the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ (verse 11). **The prophets.** Without the article in Greek, denoting prophets as a class. **Sought and searched diligently.** These two compound verbs (in Greek) are strongly emphatic, and express the earnest search. **Who prophesied.** This defines more closely the office of the prophets. WORDSWORTH : "The prophets of old *prophesied*, but were not enabled fully to understand and interpret their own prophecies." **Of the grace.** As manifested in the whole plan of salvation. **That *should come* unto you.** Destined for you.

**11. Searching what time or what manner of time.** This special search of the prophets is here stated as having reference to the exact date of the coming of the Messiah, and the circumstances and character of the time of our Lord's first Advent. The *when* of the fulfilment was unknown to the prophets. There may be a special reference to Daniel (vii. 28 ; xii. 4, 8-13). **The Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto.** "No prophecy

ever came by the will of man : but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). The Holy Ghost is here called the *Spirit of Christ*, because God the Holy Ghost, as the third Person of the Godhead, proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. We have in this verse a strong testimony both for the doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ (1 Cor. x. 4), and for the doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father (Rom. viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6; John xiv. 26). **When it testified beforehand.** One word in Greek, defining the action of the Holy Spirit in the consciousness of the prophets. The Spirit revealed, *attested beforehand the sufferings of (unto) Christ.* The sufferings appointed to Christ, which He should bear. COOK : "Peter was especially concerned to show that the sufferings of Christ were foretold, because one of the very chiefest points of controversy with the Jews referred to the question whether Christ was to suffer." (See Luke xxiv. 25, 26; Acts iii. 18; xxvi. 23.) **And the glories that should follow them.** BENDEL : "The glory of His resurrection, of His ascension, of the final judgment and the heavenly kingdom." The sufferings and the glory are closely united in the leading prophecies of Christ, typically in Ps. xxii, prophetically in Isa. liii.

12. **To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves.** This refers to the subject-matter of the revelation given to the prophets. **But unto you, did they minister these things.** The inspired utterances of the prophets concerning the Messiah were not so much for their own edification or of their own times, as for your edification, who now live in these days of the Gospel. COOK : "That both the prophets and their faithful hearers derived spiritual benefits from such instruction is certain, but it was a partial and, so to speak, reflected

light, caught from the far-off dawn of the rising of the sun of righteousness." **Which now have been announced unto you.** All these things pertaining to the mystery of salvation have now been made known to you **through them that preached the Gospel unto you.** Peter here refers to those who first preached the Gospel in Asia Minor, —to Paul and his companions. It is difficult to decide whether Peter includes himself or not. It is highly probable that he was a stranger to most of these churches of the Dispersion. **By (in) the Holy Ghost (Spirit).** The preaching of the Gospel in Apostolic times, like prophecy, proceeded also from the illumination and impulse of the Holy Spirit. **Sent forth from heaven.** Peter evidently refers to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1-4), for since that day the Holy Spirit worketh in and through the Word which is entrusted to the Church. HUTHER: "Though the same Spirit was already in the prophets (verse 11.), He had not yet, at that time, been sent from heaven." **Which things angels desire to look into.** Here the mysteries of the Gospel are represented as objects of deep contemplation and earnest inquiry, even to the angels (Eph. iii. 10).

Peter gives us the key to the right interpretation of the Hebrew Prophets. What a remarkable and unique testimony to the inspiration of the O. T. Peter not only maintains that the minds of the prophets were moved and quickened by the Holy Spirit, so that what they spoke and wrote was not the result of their own intuition or reflection, "for no prophecy ever came by the will of man" (2 Pet. i. 21), but here in this passage he definitely teaches that the Spirit of Christ presented ideas to their minds, and put words into their mouths, testifying beforehand of certain events which should happen in the



kingdom of God, which, so far from originating themselves, they were not even able to comprehend.

### 5. EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS.

13-16. Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ ; as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in *the time of* your ignorance : but like as he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living ; because it is written, Ye shall be holy ; for I am holy.

13. **Wherefore.** Since God has begotten us again unto a living hope of so glorious a salvation (3-12). **Girding up.** A figure referring to the tucking up of the dress of those about to compete for a prize. **The loins of your mind.** This girding was to be of a spiritual character, referring to the disposition of the mind,—a preparation for spiritual combat. **Be sober.** Sobriety of the mind presupposes sobriety of body. Peter here names two conditions necessary for a *perfect*, undivided hope,—a proper girding of the mind and sobriety of the mind (iv. 7 ; v. 8). **And set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be (*is being*) brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.** This future grace of the completed salvation is the *object* of our hope, which believers shall receive at the Second Coming of Christ. SADLER : “ What is it to gird up the loins of our minds ? It is surely to put out of the way anything which may hinder us in our race or in our conflict. If we find lawful things, pursuits, amusements, tastes,—otherwise innocent—hinder us, we are to put these things away, to tie them up so that they be no impediment.”

14. **As children of obedience.** This is not a new exhortation, but explains more fully how our hope may become perfect. **Not fashioning yourselves.** The same

word as in Rom. xii. 2. **According to your former lusts.** In your unconverted state (Eph. ii. 1-3). **In the time of your ignorance.** This ignorance marks not only the time when these lusts raged in their hearts, but suggests also, the ground and origin of their lusts. In the just judgment of God, ignorance and denial of God lead to pride and folly, to godlessness and abominable shame (Rom. i. 18-32). The word *ignorance* is here used as in Acts xvii. 30; Eph. iv. 18, denoting the ignorance of the Gentiles, and this verse suggests that there were many Gentile Christians among these Jewish-Christian churches of the Dispersion (i. 1).

15. **But like as he which called you is holy, or, like the Holy One which called you.** Peter, like Paul, ascribes the *calling* to the Father. **Be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living.** The daily life of those called must conform with the nature of Him who calls, for the special aim of God's calling and election is *holiness* (i. 2; Eph. ii. 4; 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7).

16. **Because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy.** This command occurs five times in Leviticus (xi. 44, 45; xix. 2; xx. 7, 26). God is our highest ideal of holiness. In Christ, in the example and pattern which the Redeemer has left us, we have the true ideal.

## 6. EXHORTATION TO GODLY FEAR.

17-21. And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *even the blood* of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, which raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God.

**17. And if ye call on him as Father.** Peter may refer here to the Lord's Prayer (GERHARD). Believers are not to forget that their heavenly Father is also the Judge, **who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work.** With God, at the day of judgment, there is no respect of persons (Rom. ii. 11), for "He will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 10). Though the Father is our Judge, this judgment has been committed to the Son (John v. 22; 1 Pet. iii. 22; iv. 5; v. 4; 2 Pet. ii. 9). **Pass the time of your sojourning.** Of your earthly life. **In fear.** A holy fear opposed to thoughtless security,—not a *slavish* fear, for this cannot co-exist with true love (1 John iv. 18), but a holy awe which dreads to grieve the love of God.

**18. Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold.** The ransom paid was, as is stated in Matt. xx. 28, the *life* of the Son of Man, "who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us" (Tit. ii. 24). The price paid, with which we were bought (1 Cor. vi. 20), is definitely stated in the next verse. **From your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers.** A description of the true essence of this earthly life, separated from the kingdom of God. The life of the natural man has no true foundation and is all vanity (Eph. iv. 17; 2 Pet. ii. 18). FRONMUELLER: "Its main stay and support lies in the force of habits, ideas, views, principles, and maxims transmitted from father to child through successive generations." Believers are redeemed from the *power* of sin, as well as from its guilt and curse.

**19. But with precious blood.** The ransom paid by Christ for us was His precious blood (Eph. i. 7; Rom. iii. 25; v. 9; Col. i. 20; Heb. ix. 12). This blood was so

precious because it was the blood of One who was not only a true man but also true God, so that with Paul we may say that "the Church has been purchased with the blood of God" (Acts xx. 28). And since it is by means of "His own blood" that Christ enters into the Holy of holies (Heb. ix. 12), it is clear that to God Himself this ransom was paid (Heb. ix. 14; Eph. v. 2). **As of a lamb.** Peter has in view Isa. liii. 7. **Without blemish and without spot.** As with Paul (1 Cor. v. 7), Peter saw in Christ the Paschal Lamb, perfectly pure within and unstained by sin from without (2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. vii. 26). (See Lev. xxii. 21.) *Even the blood of Christ.* The preciousness and redemptive power of this blood lies in this, that it is the blood of *Christ*, the divine Mediator, who offered Himself as a sacrificial lamb without blemish and without spot.

20. **Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world.** Before the foundation of the world (John xvii. 24; Eph. i. 4) it was a part of God's plan, known and provided for, that Christ should redeem the world by His blood. **But was manifested.** At the time of His Incarnation. We have here a distinct testimony to the pre-existence of Christ. **At the end of the times.** This refers to the whole period reaching from the time of the Incarnation to the Second Advent of Christ. **For your sake.** This has reference not only to the original readers of this letter, but to all believers.

21. **Who through him are believers in God.** This has special reference to the Gentile Christians among his readers. Through Christ and His Gospel they become believers in the true God, as their own God and Father. **Which raised him from the dead.** The resurrection of Christ was an act of the Triune God, but it is especially ascribed to the Father (Acts iii. 15; iv. 10; Acts xiii. 30;

Rom. iv. 24; vi. 4; etc.). **And gave him glory.** This glory was given to His human nature (John xvii. 22), for according to His divine nature Christ always possessed this glory (John xvii. 5). What this glory was, which was given Him according to His human nature, is described by Paul in Eph. i. 20-23. **So that your faith and hope might be in God.** Their *faith* was to rest on Christ's resurrection, their *hope* on His glorification. The work of Atonement was indeed potentially accomplished when Christ shed His blood on the cross, but the Resurrection, Ascension, and Glorification at the right hand of God were the final acts of the work of redemption, necessary to complete the work which Christ came to perform.

#### 7. EXHORTATION TO BROTHERLY LOVE.

22-25. Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently : having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. For,

All flesh is as grass,

And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, and the flower falleth :

But the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.

22. **Seeing ye have purified your souls.** The form of the Greek verb implies that this purification must always continue. The new life in the believer manifests itself in a twofold way, *negatively*, as purification or renovation, and *positively*, as sanctification. Purification or renovation consists in putting off the Old Man and the dominion of sin, in order that we may be renewed in the image of God. This purification does not refer so much to the outward life, for this is always implied, as to the inward consecration and purifying of all the desires and selfish aims of life (James iv. 8; 1 John iii. 3). This purification must progress from day to day (Eph. iv. 22),

for we must die unto sin continually (1 Pet. ii. 24; Rom. vi. 11). The positive side of the new life, *sanctification* (John xvii. 17, 19; 1 Thess. v. 23; 1 Cor. i. 2; Rom. xv. 16), is the putting on of the New Man (Eph. iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 10; Rom. xiii. 14; vi. 19, 22), "in sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. i. 2). **In your obedience to the truth.** In i. 2, Peter lays stress on sanctification, the positive side of the new life, but here the additional truth is taught that purification (the negative side) is promoted by *obedience to the truth*, by believing what it proclaims and doing what it requires. **Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.** The truth, if not resisted, has a purifying power and will drive out all selfishness. If we truly love Christ and become members of His spiritual body, which is the Church, we cannot but love our brethren, whom Christ also loves. **Love one another from the heart fervently.** Many ancient authorities read *from a clean heart*. We are to love with "the persevering intensity of love." (See 2 Pet. i. 7.) Brotherly love must be true and pure (*unfeigned*) (1 John iii. 18), as well as earnest and ardent, and no love can be pure unless the heart is clean.

23. **Having been begotten again.** (See notes on i. 3; James i. 18.) The brotherhood of Christians has its origin in the new birth, and it is this very fact that makes such intense love of the brethren possible. This new birth from God is a creative act (Eph. ii. 10), and for this reason the regenerate one is called a new creature, a new man (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15). Of the divine operation in itself by which we are regenerated we are not conscious, save only in its results. It is effected as unconsciously to ourselves as our conception and birth in the natural life (John iii. 8). **Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.** The origin of the new birth is now stated

in an emphatic way. Our natural birth is *of corruptible* seed, itself subject to death and bringing those begotten of it to corruption and death, but the new birth is *out of (ek) incorruptible* seed, the Word of God implanted in man (James i. 21). **Through the word of God.** This is the outward instrument through which as a means the Holy Ghost implants and begets the new life and regenerates us to faith. This Word of God is especially the Gospel in contrast to the Law. **Which liveth and abideth.** The relative refers to *word*, not to *God*, as in margin of R. V. These attributes define the inner essence of the Word. It is *living* (Heb. iv. 12), because it has life in itself, is endued with eternal, divine power, and therefore begets life in its turn. It is *abiding*, because it remains forever in its nature, power, and effects, —its results are eternal and itself never perishes (after Fronmueller).

24. **For, All flesh is as grass.** This verse is almost a literal quotation from the Greek Bible of Isa. xl. 6-8. **And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.** Therefore the new birth must take place through some means which has life and power,—through the living and abiding word, for this new life is to continue forever. **The grass withereth, and the flower falleth.** A type of the frailty of man.

25. **But the word (*saying*) of the Lord abideth forever. And this is the word (*saying*) of good tidings which was preached unto you.** LUTHER admirably says: "The Word is a divine and eternal power; for although voice and speech pass away, the substance remains,—that is, the sense, the truth which the voice conveyed. The word falls into our hearts and lives, while the voice remains without and passes away. Therefore it is indeed a divine power; yea, it is God Himself."

## CHAPTER II.

### 8. EXHORTATION TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

1-10. Putting away therefore all wickedness and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation ; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious : unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Because it is contained in scripture,

Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious :

And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

For you therefore which believe is the preciousness : but for such as disbelieve,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the head of the corner ;

and,

A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence ;

for they stumble at the word, being disobedient ; whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light : which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God : which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

1. **Putting away therefore,** Closely connected with the exhortations of the preceding chapter. This *putting away* is a figure taken from clothing and is often used in Scripture (Eph. iv. 22 ; Col. iii. 8 ; James i. 21). **All wickedness** (*malice*). *Malice* is that vicious disposition which seeks to injure our neighbor. **And all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies.** BENDEL : " Guile wrongs ; hypocrisy deceives ; envy assails our neighbor ; all do wrong



to *love*" (i. 22). **And all evil speakings.** Defamation of character, only here and 2 Cor. xii. 20 (backbitings).

2. **As newborn babes.** As having but lately been begotten into the kingdom of God. **Long.** The form of the verb denotes a strong, *intense* desire. **For the spiritual (reasonable) milk.** Peter here calls the Word of God *milk*, because by its indwelling divine power it nourishes the new life. There is no antithesis here between the milk (rudiments of the faith) and the meat (deeper truths) of the Word, as in 1 Cor. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12; vi. 1. The Word is *spiritual* (so also in Rom. xii. 1, not to be translated *reasonable* or *rational*), because it nourishes and builds up the soul and spirit, and is the means by which God bestows His Spirit. **Which is without guile.** Pure, unadulterated. FRONMUELLER: "The Word of God has the property that it exerts purifying, liberating, illuminating, and consoling influences only in its purity and entireness." **That ye may grow thereby.** This states the purpose why the Apostle exhorts believers to *long* for and diligently to *use* the Word. The new life must be strengthened and developed, and the means by which this is brought about is the Word. **Unto salvation.** For this is the final aim of all Christian growth.

3. **If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.** This does not express a doubt, for the Apostle takes it for granted that they had this inward experience. The reference is to Ps. xxxiv. 8. Peter does not here refer to Adult Baptism or to the Lord's Supper (as some Commentators maintain), but more particularly to our daily justification.

4. **Unto whom coming.** The believer must continually come to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, "drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. x. 22), "with boldness" (Heb. iv. 16), that he may ever come

into closer communion with Him. **A living stone.** Christ is called a *Stone* or rock, "because after the manner of rocks, He remains ever the same, unchangeably powerful and invincible; because His Word is firm and immovable, and because God has ordained and designed Him to be the foundation of His spiritual temple" (FRONMUELLER). He is called a *living* stone, because He is "the Living one," "alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 18), the author and giver of life (John xiv. 19). There is in Him nothing of death and decay, for He is absolute Light and Life (John xiv. 6; 1 John i. 5). **Rejected indeed of men.** The reference is to Ps. cxviii. 22 (compare Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11). Christ was and is rejected not only by "the builders" (Ps. cxviii. 22; Acts iv. 11), but *by men*, by mankind in general, by Jews and Gentiles. Believers are regarded as the only exception. **But with God.** In His sight. **Elect, precious** (*honorable*). Peter has reference to Isa. xxviii. 16, "a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation." This Christ is the *chosen* servant in whom God delighteth (Isa. xlii. 1), *precious*, held in honor. The contrast lies between the *human* judgment, *rejected*, leading to His crucifixion, and the *divine*, *chosen*, and *honored*, leading to His glorification.

5. **Ye also, as living stones.** Believers become *living* stones through the new birth, having through baptism become alive into God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 11). **Are built up.** The work of building is still going on. The end in view is the erection of **a spiritual house**. LUTHER: "The builders are the preachers; the means used is the preached Word; the Christians who hear the Gospel are they who are built up,—they are the stones which are to be fitted on Christ, the chief corner stone, so that we are to repose our confidence on Him, and let our hearts stand and rest upon Him." This *spirit-*

*ual house* is "the Church of the living God" (1 Tim. iii. 15). As a house as a whole consists of different parts, so the Church of God is composed or built up of individual believers who are *living* stones in this spiritual house. There is no reference here to the thought, so often expressed in the N. T., that the individual believer is "a temple of the living God" (2 Cor. vi. 16), in whom the Holy Spirit dwelleth (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19). In Eph. ii. 19-22 these two ideas, however, are both dwelt upon.

**To be a holy priesthood.** Every believer has the great privilege of performing the office of a priest, drawing near to God and offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Peter here definitely teaches the *universal priesthood* of all believers. This service is defined as a *holy* priesthood because its origin lies in the *Holy* Ghost, but especially because its aim is the sanctification and holiness of the believer.

**To offer up spiritual sacrifices.** This describes the activity of the Christian Church in all her members. The office of a priest is twofold, to offer sacrifice and to pray. As Christ our great High Priest offered His own body for us (Heb. x. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 24), and ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24), so all believers in the exercise of their universal priesthood must offer up spiritual sacrifices, which consist in these two things: (1) a spiritual sacrifice of their bodies (Rom. xii. 1), including true self-denial on our part (Heb. xiii. 16; Phil. iv. 18), and the taking up of one's cross daily (Luke ix. 23); and (2) prayer and praise (Heb. xiii. 15; Rev. viii. 3, 4). There is no reference here whatever to *preaching*. The universal priesthood and the *ministerial office* are two distinct things.

**Acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** For our spiritual sacrifices have no value in themselves, and we can only draw near unto God through Christ (Heb. vii. 25), and He

alone as our Mediator makes them acceptable to the Father (John xiv. 6 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5).

6. **Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious** (*honorable*). A free quotation from Isa. xxviii. 16. (See also Rom. ix. 33.) This passage in Isaiah found its fulfilment in Christ. (See also Eph. ii. 20.) **And he that believeth on him (it) shall not be put to shame.** So the Greek Bible in Isa. xxvii. 16, but the Hebrew reads, "he that believeth shall not make haste," i. e. like a coward flee. The thought is the same. We may say that the corner stone was laid at the time of the resurrection and glorification of Christ.

7. **For you (in your sight) therefore which believe is the preciousness** (*honour*). Believers shall not be put to shame, but shall be sharers in the *honor* which mystical union with that corner stone imparts. **But for such as disbelieve.** This includes not only those who actively resist, but all who do not believe on Christ (John iii. 16, 18, 36). **The stone which the builders rejected.** From the Greek Bible of Ps. cxviii. 22, also quoted by Peter in Acts iv. 11. (See notes on 1 Pet. ii. 4.) **The same was made the head of the corner.** Primarily to believers, who are built upon Him ; but unbelievers also shall find by experience, to their own sorrow, that Christ is the head of the corner. Christ Himself also quotes Ps. cxviii. 22 and adds, "Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken to pieces ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust" (Luke xx. 18).

8. **And, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.** A quotation taken from Isa. viii. 14, also referred to by Paul (Rom. ix 32, 33). The exalted and glorified Christ is objectively (not only subjectively) "a stone of stumbling," *a stone of destruction* for unbelievers (Luke ii. 34 ;

especially Luke xx. 18). **For they stumble at the word, being disobedient**, or *who stumble, being disobedient to the word*. We prefer the translation as given in the margin of the R. V. Here Peter refers to the subjective condition of unbelievers. They *stumble*, and this is their punishment, because they are *disobedient to the word*. **Whereunto also they were appointed**. Scripture is very clear on this point. No one is appointed unto *disobedience*, but all who do not believe on Christ are appointed unto *stumbling*. This is the moral order of the universe (Rom. i. 24). God punishes sin with sin, unbelief with unbelief. Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.

9. **But ye are an elect race**. The expression is taken from the Greek Bible of Isa. xliii. 20 (*chosen people*). (See also Deut. vii. 6, 7. See notes on 1 Pet. i. 1.) **A royal priesthood**. From the Greek Bible of Ex. xix. 6; the Hebrew reads *a kingdom of priests*. For the nature of this universal priesthood see notes on ii. 5. It is called a *royal* priesthood, because the Church is a *kingdom*, of which all the members are priests (Rev. i. 6; v. 10), who serve the King with spiritual sacrifices (ii. 5). **A holy nation**. Also from Ex. xix. 6. (Compare Eph. v. 25-27.) **A people for God's own possession**. From the Greek Bible of Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6; Mal. iii. 17; but especially Isa. xliii. 21. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself *a people for His own possession, zealous of good works*" (Tit. ii. 14). **That ye may shew forth the excellencies of him**. Suggested by Isa. xliii. 21 (Greek Bible). These virtues or excellencies of God are

- His glorious attributes displayed in the plan of salvation.

**Who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**. It is God the Father who calls us (1 Pet. v.

10) into His kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel.

**10. Which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.** A reference to Hos. ii. 23. In Hosea these words apply to Israel; Paul in Rom. ix. 25 applies them to the Gentiles; Peter here says that they apply to the whole Church of God, as consisting of Jews and Gentiles.

## 9. EXHORTATION TO ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS.

11, 12. Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**11. Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims.** The word *sojourners* emphasizes the idea that the home of the believer is in heaven, the second *pilgrims*, that on earth he is a stranger. **To abstain from fleshly lusts.** This presents the negative aspect of sanctification. (See notes on i. 22.) These lusts are *fleshly*, because they have their origin and seat in the flesh (Gal. v. 16, 17; Eph. ii. 3; 2 Pet. ii. 18). There is to be an inward and outward abstinence on the part of the believer (Matt. xv. 19). The lust of the flesh (gluttony, drunkenness, sensuality) gives birth to all manner of evil. **Which war.** Very suggestive,—not only do these lusts hinder and obstruct, but they fight **against the soul**, which is to be saved and purified by obedience to the truth (i. 22).

**12. Having your behaviour seemly.** Their manner of life was to be *beautiful* and *praiseworthy* by reason of purity of heart and life. **Among the Gentiles.** For the churches to which Peter wrote were in Gentile lands.

**That, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers.** This states the purpose of their good behavior. The Gentiles too often misunderstood and referred to evil motives the works and life of believers. **They may by your good works,, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.** The day of God's visitation is when He brings salvation or when He brings punishment. The context, however, shows that Peter is here referring to a gracious visitation of God to the Gentiles, who, by the good example of the believers, are brought to repentance and faith, and are thus led to glorify God.

#### 10. BE GOOD CITIZENS.

13-17. Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men : as free, and not using your freedom for a cloke of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

**13. Be subject to every ordinance (*creation*) of man.** This section is a practical application of the exhortation of verse 12. Christians are to be subject to every institution of human civil society. The moral life of society is developed in the Family, the State, and the Church. In ii. 5, Peter treats of the Church ; in ii. 18—iii. 7, of the Family ; and here, ii. 13-17, of the State. The State is not a human invention, but a divine ordinance (Rom. xiii. 1, 2). This does not, however, exclude the fact, as here stated (verses 13, 14), that the State is also a human ordinance ; for its administration and execution have, by means of a long historical development, been entrusted to the hands of sinful men. We are to obey and submit to all laws of the State that are not contrary to the divine law (Acts iv. 19, 20 ; v. 29). **For the Lord's sake.** For

such is the will of Christ, who also once was subject in all things (Matt. v. 17). **Whether it be to the king, as supreme.** The Roman Emperor Nero is here referred to.

14. **Or unto governors, as sent by (*through*) him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well.** These governors were sent by the Emperors of Rome to administer justice. (See Rom. xiii. 3, 4) Pilate, Felix, and Festus were such governors.

15. **For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.** Literally, *muzzle* the ignorance, as if it had been speaking (verse 12). WORDSWORTH: "Observe the paradox,—*muzzle* by *love*."

16. **As free.** This is to be connected with *be subject* of verse 13. Their submission to authority is not that of slaves, but as of those who have found true freedom in Christ, and who submit themselves voluntarily because "it is the will of God" (verse 15), and "for the Lord's sake" (verse 13). **And not using (*having*) your freedom for a cloke of wickedness (*malice*).** We have here a negative definition of their freedom, followed also by the positive statement, **but as bondservants of God.** (See Rom. vi. 16-18.) LUTHER: "This is said especially for us, who have heard of Christian freedom, that we may not go on and abuse this freedom, making a cloak of it; that is to say, under the name and show of Christian freedom do all that we lust after."

17. **Honour all men.** We have four exhortations in this verse, of which the first three form a climax, and in the last there is a return to the principal theme of the section. Believers are to honor *all men*, because they are God's creatures, and it is God's will that they should be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). **Love the brotherhood.** (See notes on i. 22.) **Fear God.** (See notes on i. 17.) Live as in



the very presence of God, with an holy awe, dreading in any way, either by thought, word, or deed, to grieve the love of God. **Honour the king.** The Apostle is guided by the historical conditions of his time. We honor the emperor, king, president, or governor, when we obey the laws which are administered by the authority of government.

## II. THE SUFFERING CHRIST AN EXAMPLE TO BELIEVING SERVANTS.

18-25. Servants, *be* in subjection to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted *for it*, ye shall take it patiently ? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye shall take it patiently this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called : because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps : who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth : who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, threatened not ; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously : who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness ; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep ; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

18. **Servants.** That is *household-servants*, domestics, a milder term than the one that Paul uses (*bondservants*, Eph. vi. 5 ; Col. iii. 22), probably used by Peter to designate the servants in the Jewish-Christian families. We have in this section another application of the exhortation given in verse 12. **Be in subjection to your masters with all fear.** This means more than *reverence* (Eph. vi. 5). It is a fear, based upon the fear of God, of transgressing the will of the master. **Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.** To those who are *crooked, perverse*, hard and unjust, who without cause have recourse to severity, blows, and reproaches.

19. **For this is acceptable** (*grace*), **if for conscience**

toward (*of*) God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. If we suffer "for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii. 5), on account of our obedience to God, not wishing to transgress His holy will.

20. **For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently?** None whatever, for such punishment is deserved on account of your sins. **But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable (*grace*) with God.** For there is glory in *patient* endurance of *undeserved* suffering, and this finds favor with God and is well-pleasing to Him.

21. **For hereunto were ye called.** To bear undeserved suffering patiently. This applies specially to believing servants, but holds true at the same time of all Christians, "for through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). (See notes on i. 6, 7.) **Because Christ also suffered.** Undeservedly, as Peter shows in the next three verses. **For you.** *Hyper, for your benefit*, in your behalf. We need not insist that this proposition means the same as *anti, in your stead*, as if the doctrine of *vicarious* atonement depended upon the doubtful meaning of a preposition (*anti, in place of*, is however used by Christ in Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45), for the doctrine of the *vicarious* atonement is clearly taught by Paul in all his Epistles, as well as by Peter (1 Pet. ii. 24; iii. 18). **Leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps.** Leaving to us on His ascension to heaven a *copy*, a pattern which we are to imitate. What we are to imitate, according to this passage, is Christ's *patience*, in His undeserved sufferings. HUTHER: "Wherever Scripture represents Christ as an example, it does so almost always with reference to His self-abasement in suffering and death (Phil. ii. 5; John xiii. 15;

xv. 12; 1 John iii. 16; Heb. xii. 2). Only in 1 John ii. 6 is Christ presented as an example in the more general sense."

22. **Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.** The reference is to the Greek Bible of Isa. liii. 9. Stress is here laid on the *innocent* sufferings of Christ. (See 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 John iii. 5; Heb. vii. 26. See notes on 1 Pet. i. 19.)

23. **Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not.** The reference is to Isa. liii. 7. Stress is laid, in this verse, on the *patient* sufferings of Christ. **But committed himself.** So the *text* of the Revisers, Winer, De Wette, Sadler, Plumptre, Lillie, and others; *His cause*, so *margin* of Revisers, Calvin, Gerhard, Cook, and others; *it*, i. e. His wrongs, so Luther, Huther, Wiesinger, Weiss, Keil, and others. In the *verb* no object is expressed, unless it is taken in the reflexive sense, *he committed himself*. There can be no possible objection to such an interpretation, grammatically or otherwise. It is true, however, that Christ not only committed *Himself*, but also *His cause*, *His wrongs*, and even *His wrong-doers to him that judgeth righteously*, i. e. to God the Father.

24. **Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree** (*margin, carried up . . . to the tree*). The reference is to Isa. liii. 11, 12. Stress is laid, in this verse, on the *vicarious* sufferings of Christ. Note the progress in thought in these verses, *innocent* (verse 22), *patient* (verse 23), *vicarious* (here). Christ bore our sins *in His body* by suffering *in our stead*, the punishment for our sins in the *crucifixion*, inasmuch as His body was nailed to the Cross, and died thereon, thereby delivering us from the punishment due to sin. Special stress is here laid upon the idea of Christ's *substitution* for us. **That we, having**

**died unto sins.** Peter not only teaches that by His death Christ made expiation for our sins (as also in Rom. iii. 25; Eph. v. 2; Heb. ix. 12, 14; 1 John iv. 10), but he also takes it for granted that believers by the appropriation of the merits of the death of Christ *have died* unto sin. That this was brought about by baptism is distinctly taught by Paul in Rom. vi. 2-11. **Might live unto righteousness.** For this purpose Christ died, for this God has called us into His kingdom (1 Thess. iv. 7), for this believers have been born again (1 Pet. i. 22, 23; Eph. ii. 10), this being the true fruit of our baptism into Christ (Rom. vi. 3-11). This righteousness here spoken of consists in doing the will of God. **By whose stripes (bruise) ye were healed.** Peter refers to Isa. liii. v. Strictly speaking, this refers to the *bruise*, the marks left by scourging. But here a *part* stands for *the whole*, denoting not only His scourging but all His sufferings, which culminated in His death on the cross. Christ alone is our Healer.

25. **For ye were going astray like sheep.** A reference to Isa. liii. 6. A description of the condition of those who are separated from Christ. This was true of the Christian Jews before their conversion (Matt. ix. 36) as well as of the Gentiles. **But are now returning unto the Shepherd.** Christ speaks of Himself as the good Shepherd (John x. 11), and Peter in v. 4 calls Him *the Chief Shepherd*. Of this shepherd God had already spoken through His prophet Ezekiel (xxxiv. 23). **And Bishop (overseer) of your souls.** Christ as the Head of the Church is both Shepherd and Bishop (Guardian, Protector) of *souls*, in the highest sense. As a shepherd Christ nourishes, strengthens, and feeds; as a bishop he searcheth and seeketh out His sheep and disciplines them (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12 according to the Greek Bible).

## CHAPTER III.

### 12. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN WIVES.

1-6. In like manner, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands ; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives ; beholding your chaste behaviour *coupled* with fear. Whose *adorning* let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel, but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible *apparel* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands : as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord : whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror.

1. **In like manner, ye wives.** We have in this section the third application of the exhortation given in ii. 12. Peter here shows how believing wives can do much to advance the kingdom of God. ***Be in subjection to your own husbands.*** The same thought is expressed by Paul in Eph. v. 22-24 ; Col. iii. 18. (Compare also 1 Cor. xi. 3, 8, 9, 11 ; 1 Tim. ii. 11-14.) These words are addressed to all *Christian* wives, but especially to those who have unbelieving husbands. **That, even if any obey not the word.** Disbelieve and oppose the preached Word. **They may without the word be gained by the behaviour (*manner of life*) of their wives.** That the unbelieving husband, apart from the preached Word, may be won for Christ and His kingdom, by the self-sacrificing obedience, gentleness and purity, displayed in the Christian demeanor of his believing wife.

2. **Beholding your chaste behaviour** (*manner of life coupled with fear*). The reference is not to the *fear of God*, but the thought is the same as in Eph. v. 33, "let the wife see that she fear her husband."

3. **Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning.** (See 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.) For this is but too often an external indication of the inward character of the soul. **Of plaiting the hair.** Female vanity as displayed in the invention of new styles and fashions in the braiding of the hair is constantly referred to by the satirists of this period. **And of wearing jewels of gold.** Still worn in the East (and among us) to an extent beyond all due proportion of the fitness of things. **Or of putting on apparel.** COOK: "All these expressions justify the inference that many Christian converts belonged to the middle or even opulent classes, as was certainly the case at a very early period." Peter here does not forbid dress and adornment to a woman suitable to her station in life, but exhorts her first to take heed to the *dress* and adornment of the heart. Both Peter and Paul lay stress upon a modest and seemly apparel.

4. **But let it be the hidden man of the heart.** The inner man, in contradistinction to the outward man, is to be the object of adornment. **In the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit.** This is the imperishable apparel with which the *inner* life of a true woman should be clothed, in which she should live and move. She is to be *meek*, i. e. mild, gentle, as opposed to anger, wrath (James i. 20, 21), and jealousy (James iii. 13, 14); she is to be *quiet*, tranquil, calm, not caring for passionate excitement. Such a beautiful womanly spirit is one **which is in the sight of God of great price.** LUTHER: "A woman should be thus disposed as not to care for adornment. . . . But if her husband wish it, or there be

some other good reason for adorning herself, then she is right to do so."

5. **For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves.** By these holy women are meant the saintly wives and mothers named in the O. T. **Being in subjection to their own husbands.** This is a proof that they had adorned themselves with "a meek and quiet spirit." The *margin* of the R. V. punctuates *husbands* (as *Sarah . . . ye are become*), *doing well, and not being afraid.*

6. **As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.** The allusion, evidently, is to Gen. xviii. 12, as one example of obedience, extending over her whole life. **Whose children ye now are, if ye do well.** This *doing well* proves that they have become *children* or daughters of Sarah, in the same sense as Paul speaks of Christians becoming sons of Abraham (Gal. iii. 7). This *doing well* has particular reference to the marriage relation. **And are not put in fear by (afraid with) any terror.** A difficult passage. Women, who have unbelieving husbands, are to be so full of trust in God, that they are not to manifest any nervous, shuddering fear, as if dreading some curse or blow from their unbelieving husbands, for such a demeanor, instead of leading to a faithful discharge of duty, would only incapacitate them to discharge it, and make matters worse by irritating and annoying their husbands. There is no reference here, as some maintain, to the natural fear attending childbirth (1 Tim. ii. 15).

### 13. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS.

7. **Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives** according to knowledge, giving honour unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life ; to the end that your prayers be not hindered,

7. **Ye husbands.** A fourth application of the exhortation given in ii. 12. This is evidently introduced in order to guard against any abuse of the advice given to wives, and to bring out the idea that the marriage relation is one of mutual affection. **In like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge.** The home and family life is to be regulated by knowledge and understanding. The Revised Version might be improved. The *literal* translation of this verse, adopting the critical reading *joint-heirs* in the *dative* (with Tischendorf, Tregelles in *text*, Weiss), instead of *joint-heirs* in the *nominative* (Westcott and Hort in *text* but not in *margin*) reads: *Living together, according to knowledge, with the female vessel as weaker, giving honor, as unto joint-heirs also of the grace of life.* We cannot limit the expression "dwelling together," as some do, either to the use of the marriage bed or to the question of maintenance, but must refer it to the whole married home life. **Giving honour.** In every relation of life the husband should show the respect due to his wife. **Unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel** (*unto the female vessel, as weaker*). Woman is physically man's inferior, but it is doubtful whether she is so mentally. LUTHER: "Woman is weaker in body, more timid, and more easily dispirited than man, hence your treatment of her should be such, that she may be able to bear it." **As being also joint-heirs of the grace of life.** In the married life the contrast between the man and the woman is to be harmonized in the union and reciprocity of love. No marriage in this sinful world is pure harmony and happiness. Both husband and wife must develop their own inner life, and mutually seek to educate and help each other in the work of mutual sanctification, without which the growth of true love can by no means take place. **To the end that your prayers be**



**not hindered.** ROOS: "There is no room for prayer that may be answered where the husband despises and tyrannizes his wife and where a marriage is marred by discord."

#### 14. GENERAL EXHORTATIONS TO ALL.

8-17. Finally, *be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded*: not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For,

He that would love life,  
And see good days,  
Let him refrain his tongue from evil,  
And his lips that they speak no guile:  
And let him turn away from evil, and do good;  
Let him seek peace, and pursue it.  
For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,  
And his ears unto their supplication:  
But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed *are ye*: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: *being* ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.

8. **Finally.** In close connection with ii. 11, 12. *Be ye all likeminded.* That is, let there be unity of aim and purpose. The word is found only here, but the same thought is frequently expressed in the N. T., as in Rom. xii. 16; Phil. ii. 2; etc. **Compassionate.** That is, *sympathetic*, only here. This Christian sympathy is to be displayed towards the joyful as well as towards the sorrowful (Rom. xii. 15), towards those who are suffering afflictions of body or mind. **Loving as brethren.** (See 2 Pet. i. 7.) **Tenderhearted.** Also in Eph. iv. 32. **Humble-minded.** Only here. LUTHER: "The first three ex-

pressions show the loving relation in which Christians stand to one another; the last two, the conduct of Christians towards all without destruction." Lowliness of mind will lead to Christian courtesy (Phil. ii. 3).

9. **Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling.** (See Rom. xii. 17; 1 Thess. v. 15.) Peter here gives directions how to treat the hostile world, especially when tried by persecution. **But contrariwise blessing.** Wishing well to the evil-doer and railer, and showing it in word and deed. **For hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing.** This very fact that Christians are called to inherit eternal life should incite us to bring blessing to others. A spirit of vindictiveness involves the forfeiture of the very blessing to which we are called.

10. **For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile.** Verses 10-12 are a free quotation from the Greek translation of Ps. xxxiv. 12-16. Peter strengthens his preceding exhortations by an appeal to the divine judgment, for "the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil" (verse 12). It is best to regard Peter as referring not only to the future and eternal life, but also to this *present* life of the Christian on earth. This is a good text for a New Year's sermon.

11. **And let him turn away from evil, and do good.** (See Rom. xii. 9; xvi. 17.) **Let him seek peace, and pursue it.** "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. xii. 18).

12. **For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication.** Believers are to trust in their omniscient and omnipresent heavenly Father, who hears the prayers of His children. **But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil.** "For it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense,

saith the Lord " (Rom. xii. 19). In this last verse Peter distinguishes very clearly between God's providential care for the righteous, and His omniscient judgment upon evil-doers.

13. **And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good ?** The interrogative form (as in Rom. viii. 33, 35) expresses the sure confidence of the Apostle, that no one will be suffered to harm or injure those who are zealous of that which is good, for "to them that love God, all things work together for good" (Rom. viii. 28), and nothing can separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

14. **But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye.** The sufferings which overtake believers bring no *harm*, they only contribute to their blessedness, for sufferings and trials prove the faith and work patience. (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 6, 7 ; James i. 2, 3. See Matt. v. 10.) **And fear not their fear, neither be troubled.** Be not afraid of the fear which these evil-doers would excite in you, for they cannot do you any real harm. This passage is a free quotation of the Greek Bible of Isa. viii. 12, 13.

15. **But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord.** The reference is to Isa. viii. 13. WORDSWORTH: "This precept is a proof of the *divine* nature of Christ. He is the Lord Jehovah. When we say, 'Hallowed be Thy name,' in the Lord's Prayer, we pray for the sanctification of the Name of our *Lord Christ*. Christ is to be worshipped as God, in the temple of our hearts ; His glory is to be the aim and end of all our actions ; His word our law ; His grace our strength ; His blessed self the object of our desires." We sanctify the name of God and of Christ, "when the Word of God is taught in its truth

and purity, and we, as the children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with it" (LUTHER). **Being ready always to give answer.** (Compare Rom. x. 9, 10.) Striving after sanctification and confession of your faith go hand in hand. **To every man that asketh you a reason.** We need not give a reason for our hope to every one, to scoffers, railers, or such like, for this would be like giving that which is holy unto the dogs, or like casting pearls before the swine (Matt. vii. 6), but to *every man asking reasons*, and we are to be ready *always*. **Concerning the hope that is in you.** Note the personal application, the *hope* that is *in you*. You are to give, not a learned discussion, but an *apology*, a defence, an *answer*, a clear but simple presentation of the reasons why *you believe*, and why *you are assured* of the *hope* of eternal life. According to Peter (i. 3), it is this *living* hope, which is the end of our regeneration. **Yet with meekness.** Not with insolence, or presumption, or with passionate zeal. **And fear.** Lest, by any fault, your presentation of truth might not commend itself to men's consciences in the sight of God (2 Cor. iv. 2; Col. iv. 6).

16. **Having a good conscience.** To be connected with *sanctify* of verse 15, not co-ordinate with *ready* (as Bengel, Steiger, De Wette, the *Revisers*), but subordinate (so Wiesinger, Lillie, Fronmueller, Huther, etc.). "Only he is able to defend his Christian hope with full assurance, who has kept in a good conscience, as in a good vessel, the grace he has received." The conscience of a believer is good (Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 5, 19; Heb. xiii. 18; 1 Pet. iii. 21) when he knows that his life and doing is in harmony with the divine law. For the same reason it is also called pure (1 Tim. iii. 9; 2 Tim. i. 3), void of offence toward God and man (Acts xxiv. 16). The necessity, however, of a growth of the purity of conscience is con-

stantly recognized in Scripture (Rom. xii. 2 ; Phil. i. 9 ; Heb. v. 14). Believers are to strive after *moral certainty* (Rom. xiv. 1, 13-23 ; 1 Cor. viii. 7, 12 ; James i. 8 ; iv. 8). **That wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life.** Because their slanders are thus openly proved to be lies. **In Christ.** In union with Him and through His power and life.

17. **For it is better.** The reason *why* has already been given in ii. 19-21. In no event can the believer escape suffering. (See notes on ii. 21.) **If the will of God should so will.** If such should be the will of God. LUTHER : "Go thou on in faith and love ; if the cross comes, take it up ; if it comes not, do not seek it." **That ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.** Here no stress is laid on suffering *patiently* as in ii. 20.

#### 15. ENFORCED BY REFERENCE TO THE SUFFERINGS AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

18-22. Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit ; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved, through water : which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

18. **Because Christ also suffered.** Some ancient authorities read *died*. In ii. 19-21 the exhortation to suffering is also enforced by reference to the sufferings of Christ, but here special stress is laid on the Exaltation of Christ which followed. Christ, the righteous one, *suffered*, His whole life was one continued life of suffering from the manger to the cross, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted

with grief" (Isa. liii. 3), but this suffering culminated in His death on the cross. (See notes on ii. 21, 24.) **For sins.** Sin was the occasion and cause of His sufferings, but this sin was *ours*. **Once.** His sufferings culminated on the cross. He suffered and died *once*, once for all (Rom. vi. 10), "having been *once* offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. ix. 28), and this sacrifice and death need never be repeated. **The righteous for the unrighteous.** That is, these sufferings were *vicarious*, in our stead. The idea of *substitution* cannot be more clearly expressed. **That he might bring us to God.** This states the purpose of Christ's suffering, to bring us into communion with God, and finally into His glorious presence, into heaven. How this bringing of the believer to God took place through Christ, is now more fully stated in the next clause, as effected by His death, revivification, and exaltation. **Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit.** There is a sharp antithesis here between the dying of Christ and His being made alive. It is arbitrary, however, to insist that the datives (*sarki, pneumati*) must be taken in the same sense, as Wiesinger, Weiss, Fronmueller, Huther, and others, maintain. *In the flesh* marks the dative of *the sphere in which* he died, and *in* or better *by the spirit* denotes the *instrumental* dative, the means *by which* His body was made alive. The word *flesh* refers to the human nature of Christ, and the word *spirit* cannot refer to the *human* spirit of Christ, no matter how we interpret the *dative*, but must refer to the divine nature, or to the Spirit of God dwelling in Christ (Col. ii. 9). The analogy of faith helps us to decide, for it cannot refer to the *human spirit* of Christ, whether we translate *in the spirit* (dative of sphere),—for when Christ died according to His human nature, His human soul and human spirit intimately united, did not die, but con-

tinued to exist in most intimate union with the divine nature, and needed no quickening,—or whether we translate *by the spirit* (instrumental dative), for in itself there was no power or virtue in His human spirit to bring about the quickening of the body. The true solution lies in referring *spirit* to the divine nature, or, which is the same thing, to the Holy Spirit, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ. On account of the unique personal union of the divine and human natures in the one Person, by means of the Spirit, the very life and essence of His divine nature, and because He was also true God, His *body* was made alive, restored to life, *quicken*ed.

To understand this passage we must carefully compare the teaching of Peter on this same topic in Acts ii. 24–31. There is this difference, however, that in Acts ii. 24 Peter grounds the necessity of Christ being made alive upon the fact that it was foretold in prophecy (Acts ii. 26–28), while here in 1 Pet. iii. 18, Peter refers it to the unique personal union of the divine and the human natures of Christ in one divine human personality. For here the contrast lies between His human nature, flesh, *in which* He was put to death, and His *Spirit*, His divine nature, *by which* and in the power of which, as being true God, His body was restored to life. Note distinctly that the passage in Acts ii. 24–31 refers to the *Descent of the Soul of Christ* into Hades *before* His resurrection, and that this Descent is the last act in His state of *humiliation*, and must sharply be distinguished from His Second Descent into Hades as the Risen God-Man, which is the first act of the state of *Exaltation*, and to which the next two verses refer. (See *Excursus II.*)

19. **In which also.** Not *in which spirit* also he went ; nor does it so much describe the means *by which*, that by the power of the Spirit *he went*, although this idea need

not necessarily be excluded, but it defines the *condition* in which *he went*, in which *quicken*ed condition, as the Risen Christ, restored to life, although not yet manifested to any one by His *visible* resurrection. **He went.** *He*, the Christ, the God-man, quickened as to His body, the now living Christ, having overcome death, *went*. Peter makes a positive assertion that Christ, thus quickened, with soul and body reunited, performed a certain act, *he went and preached*. No matter to what mystery this may lead us, this is what Peter says. Peter further states *whither* He went and *to whom* He preached, even **unto the spirits in prison**. By these *spirits* we are not to understand angels, nor "men living upon the earth," but the *souls* of men already dead. The words *in prison* designate not only the *place* but also the *condition* in which these spirits were. HUTHER: "They were in prison as prisoners. They were in that part of the kingdom of the dead (*Hades*) which serves as the abode for the souls of the ungodly until the day of judgment. . . . Christ went to those spirits, and preached to them in that place where they were." This prison was the place where the souls of men, "which aforetime were disobedient," were confined (verse 20). We have a right to infer that it was that part of Hades in which the rich man found himself in torments and anguish immediately after death (Luke xvi. 23),—where "the unrighteous are kept under punishment unto the day of judgment" (2 Peter ii. 9),—the place in which the souls of all the ungodly of the ancient world found themselves,—probably the place also where "the angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, are kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6),—"the Tartarus into which the angels which sinned were cast when they were committed to pits of



darkness, to be reserved unto judgment " (2 Peter ii. 4). Peter says Christ *preached*. The Greek word here used, in its classical usage from Homer down, means " to proclaim after the manner of a herald, with an authority which must be listened to and obeyed." In the N. T. the word is continually used to designate the proclamation of the message of the Gospel. It is the making known of the facts of salvation. It differs from the Greek word *evangelize* (1 Peter iv. 6), in that this latter characterizes the contents of the preaching as " good news." The word that Peter here uses discloses neither the contents nor the purpose of Christ's preaching, it defines neither its nature, nor the effect it may have on the hearer. It may refer to the announcement of pardon to penitents, or of destruction to rebels. It is altogether arbitrary to infer that this passage is in favor of the doctrine of a *second probation after death*, or of a *universal restoration* of the ungodly, as if this was an offer of forgiveness to these spirits in prison, and as if some, or all, had an opportunity to repent, and embraced it. It was a *heralding*, not in order to liberate them or to give them time for repentance, but to manifest and make known the glorious victory which Christ had obtained over death and Satan. Even if it were an offer of forgiveness, which cannot be established exegetically,—especially as Peter uses another word in 1 Peter iv. 6, and such a view is positively contrary to the analogy of faith,—it would not follow that any would repent. For the effect of the preaching of the Gospel depends, humanly speaking, on the condition of those who hear. On the other hand, it is strictly in accordance with the context and with the analogy of faith, to assume that this preaching consisted in the proclamation of Christ's victory over death, Satan, and Hades. The wonders of Christ's redemption are

greater than many of us conceive ; for His work, in certain aspects, has a bearing upon the whole universe.<sup>1</sup>

**20. Which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.** This specifies more particularly the time when these ungodly souls were disobedient. It was during the long period in which Noah was building the ark (Gen. vi. 3, 8, 13, 14). Noah's contemporaries are here especially named, possibly with reference to the words of Jesus in Luke xvii. 26, and in consideration of the exceeding depravity and obduracy of that age, without intending to limit this proclamation to them exclusively. The context in 2 Peter ii. 3-9, establishes the same point. The ungodly of the ancient world are especially referred to, but the evil angels and the souls of the unrighteous of 2 Peter ii. 9, and of all pre-Christian times, which are kept under punishment unto the day of judgment, are not excluded.

<sup>1</sup> Christ's work of redemption was potentially finished when He was made alive ; He had met death and overcome the power of Hades : but now Christ descended into the very hold of Satan, into the very centre of his dominion, there to herald forth His victory, and make manifest His triumph over the power of Satan. Then took place that wondrous scene to which Paul refers, when Christ "put off from himself the principalities and the powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. ii. 15). Doubtless, in connection with this revelation of Christ in Hades as the place of misery, great changes took place in the kingdom of Satan. There was in some sense a real curbing in of the power of Satan, at least for the believer. Hades, as the place of misery, remains now as the fore-hell, the abode of all evil angels, including the souls of the ungodly dead (Rev. xx. 13), into which all the souls of unbelievers still enter, reserved under punishment until the day of judgment (2 Pet. ii. 9), and it will finally become the Gehenna, the Hell proper, where body and soul, reunited, shall suffer eternal punishment. And though the full meaning and significance of this difficult passage may never be fully understood by us here on earth, we believe that the exegesis as given above is in strict accordance with the words of Peter, in harmony with the analogy of faith, and that, in connection with 1 Pet. iv. 6 (which see), it opens to us a deeper insight into the wonders of redemption.

Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. Margin of R. V. reads : *into which few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through water.* The meaning is, *into which* ark entering, *few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.* Noah and those with him were saved by going into the ark, which is a type of the Church, and they were saved *by means of water* in that "it bare up the ark" (Gen. vii. 17, 18).

21. **Which also after a true likeness** (*in the antitype*) **doth now save you.** The thought is, *water* saved Noah and those with him, and it is *water* by which you also are saved. Peter, in encouraging believers to endure suffering, is developing the thought how believers are brought into communion with God (verse 18). He lays stress (1) upon the work of Christ, showing how salvation has been procured for us, (a) by His sufferings and death (verse 18); (b) by His restoration to life (verse 18); (c) by His visible resurrection (verse 21); (d) by His ascension (verse 22); by His exaltation at the right hand of God; and (2) upon the means by which this salvation procured by Christ is to be applied to us, which is *even baptism*. The water of the flood, inasmuch as it carried the ark, thus saving Noah and his family, is a *type*; the water of baptism is the antitype; the one saved few, the other saves the many; but it is the water of baptism which *saves*. **Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.** Peter does not here discuss the whole subject of baptism, but only states more particularly in what sense it brings salvation, and this he does first negatively and then positively. It is not an outward cleansing, but an inward, spiritual cleansing. **But the interrogation** (*inquiry or appeal*) **of a good conscience toward God.** Peter has in view the baptism of adults. They have heard the Word and have been regenerated to

faith (1 Peter ii. 23), and this Word points to baptism as the means by which they become incorporated into permanent and living union and communion with Christ, and thus become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and of peace and forgiveness. One who has heard the Gospel message and receives it with a believing heart, earnestly seeks to have a *good conscience* towards God, "to cleanse his conscience from dead works that he may serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14), "to have his heart sprinkled from an *evil* conscience, and his body washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22), that is, to be baptized. This shows what Peter means when he says that baptism is the *interrogation, inquiry, appeal*, better still the *answer* or *pledge*<sup>1</sup> on the part of God "of a good conscience toward God." This *good* conscience is the aim sought for in baptism. It does not exist *before* baptism, but is received and effected *by* baptism. **Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** This states more particularly why there is such a virtue in baptism. It is because of Christ's resurrection from the dead. The virtue and efficacy does not depend upon the form in which baptism is administered, nor upon the quantity of water used. All this has nothing whatever to do with its saving power. The great point at issue is, that through and by means of baptism we are united to a *living* and *risen* Christ, and in Him we become alive unto God, and dead unto sin (Rom. vi. 4-11).

<sup>1</sup> Various interpretations have been given of the original Greek word. According to its derivation and classical usage the word means *an inquiry, a question*. In this passage some maintain it means *earnest seeking*; others, *demand*; many refer it to the *questions and answers*, which were made and given at baptism; still others to the *promise* given by the baptized person. It is best (with Cremer and others) to regard Peter's expression as referring to that which has been asked and desired, and obtained from God in baptism, which in fact constitutes a good conscience.

22. **Who is on the right hand of God.** Note how in this section all the steps in the state of exaltation are dwelt upon: (1) quickening (verse 18) as the transition from the state of Humiliation to that of Exaltation; (2) the Descent of the Risen Christ to Hades (verse 19); (3) the Resurrection proper as a visible reality (verse 21); (4) the Ascension into heaven (verse 22); (5) the Assumption of Divine Power (verse 22). In His state of humiliation Christ abstained from the full, universal use of the divine glory and majesty which He possessed. For our sakes He pleased not Himself (Rom. xv. 3), but denied Himself and abstained from His rights. In the great fact of Christ's humiliation Paul lays stress upon three points: (1) He emptied Himself; (2) by taking the form of a servant; (3) by becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 6-8). As a reward for this Christ has been exalted, according to His human nature, to the full participation in the divine honor and dominion of the world (Phil. ii. 9-11), which according to His divine nature He always possessed, so that He, the God-man, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt here on earth (Col. i. 19), now is the head of all principalities and power (Col. ii. 10). These words of Peter, *who is on the right hand of God*, point out the present condition of the glorified Christ, which He now possesses also according to His human nature. This *being* at the right hand of God, also often described as a *sitting* (Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; x. 12; xii. 2), gives prominence to the power and glory of Christ, and to His supreme majesty in ruling over all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. **Having gone into heaven.** The narrative of the Ascension is given in Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9-11. **Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.** With special reference to evil angels and

demoniacal powers (see Col. ii. 15 ; Eph. i. 21 ; Heb. ii. 8), the powers of evil which had been subdued by the conquering Christ in His descent into Hades (verse 19). Comparing this verse with 1 Tim. iii. 16 and with the parallel clauses of the Apostles' Creed, some have thought that we have here a precious fragment of the baptismal profession of faith of the Apostolic Church.

## CHAPTER IV.

### 16. THEREFORE BE YE DEAD UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD.

1-6. Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries ; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you* : who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

1. **Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh.** The Apostle returns again to the thought of iii. 18, in order to make the personal application as given in this section. The glorious development of truth, contained in iii. 18b-22, was simply a digression from the main argument. **Arm ye yourselves also with the same mind** (*thought*). To suffer in the flesh. The nature of this *suffering in the flesh* is brought out in the next two verses, as a dying to the lusts of the flesh, a putting to death of the old man (Rom. viii. 13 ; Col. iii. 5). We are to *arm* ourselves with the consecrated *purpose* of dying to sin. Paul speaks, on the other hand, "of putting on the armor of light" (Rom. xiii. 12), and "of putting on the whole armor of God" (Eph. vi. 11), but there is no conflict here. **For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.** Some ancient authorities read *unto sins*.

In spite of the varied attempts on the part of commentators to interpret this passage, there is but one true explanation. The same thought underlies these words of Peter as in Rom. vi. 1-11; Col. ii. 10-13. The reference is to what took place in the baptism of the believer. In baptism "we were united with Christ by the likeness of His death," "buried with Him into death," "the old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away," "we died with Christ" (Rom. vi. 4-8), and "he that hath died is justified from sin," and "dead unto sin" (Rom. vi. 7-11).

2. **That ye (*he*) no longer should live the rest of your (*his*) time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.** The same general thought as in Rom. vi. 11, "even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

3. **For the time past may suffice.** A mild way of expressing that their past lives had been wasted in sin. **To have wrought the desire of the Gentiles.** The contrast here implied is between *you* Christians (whether of Jewish or Gentile origin) and the *Gentiles*, in whose midst you are living. The sins now enumerated are especially characteristic of the moral degradation of the Gentile world, but even some of the Jews may have become guilty of them in those profligate times. **And to have walked in lasciviousness.** Embracing especially unchastity in all its abominable forms. **Lusts.** Referring chiefly to impure sensual desires. **Winebibbings.** Drunkenness. **Revellings, carousings.** Applied chiefly to social drinking at their feasts. **And abominable idolatries.** Abominable in the sight of God and man.

4. **Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* into the same excess (*flood*) of riot.** The Gentiles among whom you live are astonished that you



no longer take part in their revellings and excesses and terrible sins of debauchery. **Speaking evil of you.** *Blaspheming*, speaking evil not only of believers, but of the Christian religion.

5. **Who shall give account.** These evil-speaking and blaspheming Gentiles will have to give account of their words and deeds at the time of judgment. **To him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.** It is the risen and glorified Christ who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts x. 42 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1). With Peter the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment are very closely connected. We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, those who are *alive* at His Second Coming (1 Thess. iv. 17 ; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52), as well as those who have died before (2 Cor. v. 10).

6. We might easily tabulate thirty distinct and different interpretations of this verse as given by commentators. Many confess that they cannot understand its true meaning, while some think that there may be a corruption in the text. We grant that this verse is very difficult of interpretation, and that it cannot be understood unless we connect it with what Peter has already stated in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 (which see). If, however, we follow the direct and exact words of Peter, and trace his thought, and bring to our aid the analogy of faith, we will find a great and comforting truth herein recorded. For the true interpretation we must give the same meaning to the word *dead* in this verse as in the preceding. It cannot mean "those that were dead in sins," nor can we interpret that "the Gospel was preached in their lifetime to those now dead." A true exegesis, no matter how difficult the solution may be, requires that we refer this verse to the same event spoken of in iii. 19,—to an oc-

currence taking place after Christ's revivification, before His visible resurrection, and that these dead to whom *the Gospel was preached* were the souls of the *blessed* dead, who were in that part of Hades known as Paradise. We will first give a simple exegesis of this verse and then develop its teaching in connection with 1 Pet. iii. 19. **For unto this end.** What the aim and purpose of this *preaching of the Gospel* was, is clearly stated at the end of the verse. Two things were to be accomplished, the one, *that they might live according to God in the spirit*, having reference to the condition of the *blessed* dead, during the period elapsing between Christ's ascension into heaven and the resurrection of believers at His Second Coming, and the other, *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh*, having reference more particularly to the judicial and forensic relation which, as believers, they should occupy at the future judgment. They were to have the same relation to the final judgment as believers now on earth. **Was the Gospel preached** (*were the good tidings preached*). One word in Greek. The word is altogether different from that used for the *heralding* of iii. 19. **Even to the dead.** These were the souls of the O. T. saints who were still held under the power of death and of Hades, in the upper part of Hades.

Let us now trace the thought more closely. Peter, in the preceding verse, lays down the law of judgment for all unbelievers, who walk in all kinds of excess, and who speak evil of believers. Christians, on the other hand, during *the rest of their time in the flesh* (while they are still on earth) are not living *to the lusts of men, but to the will of God* (verse 2); for "Christ has suffered in the flesh" (iv. 1), "that He might bring us to God" (iii. 18) and that we might do His will (iv. 2). Since Christ shall judge the living and *the dead*, and because He has brought by

His death and sufferings *all* believers unto God (iii. 18), the saints of the O. T. *who were dead*, who in Paradise with Abraham were awaiting the coming of the Messiah in whom they had believed, were also entitled to hear the good news that Hades, Satan, and death had been overcome. That is, we maintain that the true interpretation of this passage opens to us a still deeper insight into the wonders of God's saving grace. Peter here unveils another mystery belonging to the great work of redemption. He has reference to the manifestation of Christ in the world of departed spirits which took place at the same time as the event recorded in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, but the reference is now to what took place in the upper part of Hades, in Paradise, where the souls of the O. T. saints were still held under the power of death, Satan, and Hades. Unto them Christ also manifested Himself after His revivification, and to them His appearance was also one of triumph and glory. But to them He appeared as their glorious and Risen Lord, the conqueror of Satan and the power of death. He also heralded forth His victory, but His preaching was not simply an announcement of His victory as it had been when He appeared to the spirits in prison (iii. 19), for now it was a *preaching of good tidings*. It brought joy and peace to the O. T. saints. The teaching of Scripture warrants us in believing that at Christ's glorious descent into Hades as the risen God-man, great changes were wrought in the condition of the souls of the saints.<sup>1</sup> That part of Hades known as

<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, Hades as such remained the abode of all evil angels, including the souls of the ungodly dead (Rev. xx. 13), and it is reserved as the fore-hell into which all the souls of unbelievers *now* enter until the day of judgment, and this Hades it seems will finally become the *Gehenna*, the Hell proper, where the bodies and souls of unbelievers reunited shall suffer. On the other hand, that part of Hades which had been known as Paradise before Christ's descent as the risen God-man, has now yielded

Paradise before Christ's resurrection has now yielded up its captives, for the Lord Jesus "hath led captivity captive" (Eph. iv. 8, 9); He has snatched all the blessed dead from Hades, and the gifts which the exalted Christ gave to the saints of the O. T., when He ascended on high and entered upon His kingly and heavenly throne, were freedom from the dominion of Satan and Hades, and the blessedness and glory of being with Him in heaven, and from this time forward Paradise is not regarded as a place or condition of joy *on* the earth as it was before the Fall, nor *under* the earth as the upper place of Hades where the blessed dead were between the Fall and the resurrection of Christ, but as *above* the earth in heaven itself (2 Cor. xii. 1-4). And ever since Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, the souls of the blessed dead, according to the constant testimony of the N. T. Scriptures, are in heaven with Christ, under the throne of His glory, and the souls of all believers who now die enter immediately into heaven, and not into Hades, to be with Christ in joy and glory,—there in blessedness to await the Second Coming of Christ and their glorious resurrection, when with body and soul reunited, they shall enter upon their eternal glory. (See *Excursus* III.) Neither here in 1 Pet. iv. 6 or in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 does Peter teach anything that favors the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. (See *Excursus* IV.) Nor can these passages be construed in favor of the philosophical and speculative doctrines of Universal Restoration or of Continued Probation. (See *Excursus* V.) The clear testimony of our Lord and of all His Apostles is that the up its captives, for the Lord Jesus hath led captivity captive. Paul refers to this triumphal act of the risen Christ in Eph. iv. 8, 9, "when He ascended on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Christ opened the prison-house of Hades for the believing saints of the O. T., which had no exit until Christ overcame death.

offer of salvation belongs exclusively to earth and to our present life. **That they might be judged according to men in the flesh.** That these O. T. saints, at the final judgment, might stand in the same judicial relation to the kingdom of God as their fellow-saints which were still living in the flesh on earth and now had the Gospel preached to them. **But live according to God in the spirit.** That these O. T. saints *now* in their blessed condition in heaven, in the presence of Christ, in the period intervening between Christ's Ascension and His Second Coming, might live in their glorious spiritual existence, separated from the body, in the full enjoyment of the peace and joy of heaven, which Christ obtained for them by His death and exaltation.

#### 17. EXHORTATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE APPROACHING JUDGMENT.

7-11. But the end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer : above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves ; for love covereth a multitude of sins : using hospitality one to another without murmuring : according as each hath received a gift, ministering among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God ; if any man speaketh, *speaking* as it were oracles of God ; if any man ministereth, *ministering* as of the strength which God supplieth : that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7. **But the end of all things is at hand.** The series of exhortations contained in iv. 7—v. 11, having special reference to Christian life in the Church, is closely connected with the thought of the impending judgment. Peter refers to the thought contained in iv. 5, that Christ is “ready to judge the living and the dead.” With the judgment comes *the end of all things*. Peter knew not the time of the Second Advent, but he regarded it near. (See notes on James v. 8.) **Be ye therefore of sound mind.** In

contrast to the licentiousness of the Gentiles as described in iv. 2, in view of the judgment near at hand, they are *to be temperate*, using the proper mental discretion and watchfulness, governing all immoderate and sinful affections. (See v. 8; Rom. xii. 3; Tit. ii. 6.) **And be sober unto prayer** (*prayers*). For a mind excited by passions and lusts cannot be in a spirit for prayer. In Greek the word *prayer* is in the plural; this suggests that there are different kinds of prayers, that we ought to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. v. 17), and may refer to the regular prayers offered daily by the Church.

**8. Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves.** Peter takes for granted that this brotherly love exists, but he exhorts that it be *fervent*. (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 22.) **For love covereth a multitude of sins.** A proverbial saying after Prov. x. 12. LUTHER gives the true explanation: "This *covering* is spoken of as regards our neighbor, and not as it respects God. Nothing can cover my sin before God except faith. But my love covers the sin of my neighbor; and just as God covers with His love my sins, if I believe, so too ought I to cover my neighbor's sins."

**9. Using hospitality one to another without murmuring.** True brotherly love, following the example of Christ, is *ministering* love, intent on self-denial and self-sacrifice to promote the well-being of fellow-Christians. (See Matt. xxv. 35; Rom. xii. 13; 1 Tim. iii. 2; v. 10; Tit. i. 8; Heb. xiii. 2; 3 John 5.) There is no reference here to the social hospitality of modern times. The chief emphasis lies on the expression *without murmuring*, the existence of hospitality being taken for granted. In the early Church care was taken to provide for the support of the poor, the sick, the aged, the widow, and the orphan, and special care was taken to look after the breth-

ren imprisoned on account of their faith, and to show hospitality to believing strangers. The Church of the present day has as yet much to learn in the carrying out of the principles underlying this verse.

**10. According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** Peter takes it for granted that every believer has received some kind of a spiritual gift, and that in some way he can aid in the development of the spiritual life in the Church. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, mentioned in Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 4, 28, may be referred to, but the ordinary gifts of grace and even of the body and mind are not to be excluded.

**11. If any man speaketh.** Peter in this verse specially calls our attention to two kinds of gifts, but these include all that is needed for the edification and organization of the Church. This *speaking* has reference to the official act of preaching under its various forms. It includes the *prophesying*, the *teaching*, and the *exhorting* of Rom. xii. 6-8, as well as *the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge*, and the *prophecy* of 1 Cor. xii. 8-10. **Speaking as it were oracles of God.** He who preaches is not to give utterance to his own opinions or thoughts, but let him confine himself to the revelations of God, what God has revealed in His Word. (See Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Heb. v. 12.) **If any man ministereth.** This does not refer only to the office of the *deacon* or of the diaconate (Acts vi. 1-6; 1 Tim. iii. 8-13), but seems to include public ministrations of every kind in the Church as well as ministering to the wants of poor Christians (Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28). In the last case it would refer especially to the care of the sick, of the poor, and of strangers. **Ministering as of the strength which God supplieth.** The desire to minister and to serve, the act

itself, and the strength to accomplish it, all comes from God. Let no one lose heart in the manifestation of his love by this ministering service, for God will supply the strength. **That in all things.** In all your doings. **God may be glorified.** The aim and end of all the Apostle's exhortations. **Through Jesus Christ.** GERHARD: "As through Christ all benefits descend upon us from God, so also ought we in humble gratitude to refer all things through Christ to the glory of God." **Whose is.** This doxology may refer either to *God*, the subject of the clause (so Calvin, Bengel, De Wette, Brueckner, Wiesinger, Weiss, Hofmann, Huther, Fronmueller, etc.), or to *Jesus Christ* (so Calovius, Steiger, Sadler, etc.). It is best here to refer it to *God the Father* as in 1 Pet. v. 11, although the glory of the Father and the Son cannot be separated. In 2 Pet. iii. 18, Peter refers this glory to Jesus Christ. **The glory and the dominion for ever and ever** (*unto the ages of the ages*). **Amen.** It is highly probable that the Apostle is using a liturgical formula well known in the Church. (See Rev. i. 6; v. 13.)

#### 18. EXHORTATIONS TO ENDURE PERSECUTION.

12-19. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you; but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are ye*; because the *Spirit* of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if *a man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name. For the time *is come* for judgement to begin at the house of God: and if *it begin* first at us, what *shall be* the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator.



12. **Beloved.** This word, as in ii. 11, denotes the great sympathy which Peter has with them in their sufferings. **Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you.** For hereunto were ye called. (See notes on ii. 21 and i. 7.) On *proving* see notes on i. 7; James i. 2, 3. **As though a strange thing happened unto you.** BENDEL: "That adversities should befall the saints is, in one point of view, something *strange*, since they are sons of God; in another, it is not strange, since that is the very thing calculated to purify them." (See 2 Tim. iii. 12.) This reference to the nearness of the fiery trial seems to indicate that this letter was written only a short time before the Neronian persecution.

13. **But inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice.** The word *inasmuch* denotes the reason and the measure of the rejoicing. *In so far as, to the extent in which* they are partakers of these sufferings they are *to rejoice*. Peter refers to these sufferings of Christ in i. 11; ii. 21-24; iii. 18. On *rejoicing* see notes on James i. 2. **That at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy.** This revelation will occur when Christ, at His Second Advent (Matt. xxv. 31), comes to judge the living and the dead (1 Pet iv. 5). To believers this revelation will be a day of joy, to unbelievers a day of terror.

14. **If ye are reproached for (in) the name of Christ, blessed are ye.** That is, for the sake of Christ and as followers of Christ, for being a Christian (iv. 16). (See Matt. v. 11; Luke vi. 22.) **Because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you.** The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of *glory*, because glory in a special sense is an attribute of the third Person of the Trinity, and because He brings glory and seals it to the

suffering believer. In the A. V. and the *Textus Receptus* there is added a clause, "on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." This evidently is a gloss, and is not found in the most ancient Greek MSS., and is therefore rightly rejected by all the critical editors of the Greek text, as well as by the Revisers.

15. **For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief.** SADLER: "Does not this warning teach Christian preachers a lesson, that no matter how high they assume the spiritual state of their hearers to be, they must speak to them as still in the flesh, and not above the temptations to commit even gross sin?" **Or an evil-doer.** Every kind of crime is included. **Or as a-meddler-in-other men's-matters.** One word in Greek, meaning "one who undertakes the supervision of affairs pertaining to others which in no wise concern him." Peter evidently refers to those who, with holy but indiscreet zeal, meddle with the affairs of unbelievers (possibly of believers also),—whether public or private, civil or sacred,—in order to make them conform to their standard. There are always such officious persons found in every Christian congregation. Wordsworth (and others) would apply this warning to those who assume spiritual functions which do not belong to them, and to those who call themselves successors of Peter.

16. **But if a man suffer as a Christian.** This name is found only *here* and in Acts xi. 26; xxvi. 28. **Let him not be ashamed.** (Compare Rom. i. 16; 2 Tim. i. 8, 12.) For such sufferings are precious jewels in the sight of God (CALOVIUS). (See Acts v. 41.) **But let him glorify God.** BENDEL: "Peter might have said, by antithesis, *let him esteem it an honor*; but he shows that the honor must be attributed to God, who, while He counts the be-

liever worthy of the honor of suffering, confers on him a great blessing, as well as an exemption from the punishment which will overtake the wicked." **In this name.** In the name *Christian*.

17. **For the time is come for judgement to begin.** Another proof that the Epistle was written on the eve of the Neronian persecution. Peter felt that he was living in the last age of the world, and that "the end of all things was at hand" (iv. 7). **At the house of God.** Literally *from the house*. This house is the Church of believers. The judgment takes place first *in the house of God* and thence proceeds further on. **And if it begin first at us.** Scripture very clearly teaches that judgment begins with the Church (Jer. xxv. 29; xlix. 12; Heb. xii. 6), but to true believers it is a judgment of mercy, while to unbelievers it is a judgment, revealing the wrath of God and His punitive justice (Matt. xxv. 34, 41; Rom. ii. 3-10; 2 Thess. i. 5-10; Rev. vi. 15-17; xx. 11-15). The judgment of believers leads to eternal life, that of unbelievers to perdition (Phil. i. 28; iii. 19; Rev. xvii. 8, 11), even unto eternal death (Matt. xviii. 8; xxv. 41, 46; 2 Thess. i. 9; Jude 7). **What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?** A question more awful and awe-inspiring than any assertion. AUGUSTINE (quoted by Wordsworth): "In this verse Peter shows that the sufferings of the righteous proceed from the judgment of God, which begins with the house of God; whence we may infer, how awful will be the sufferings which are reserved for the ungodly."

18. **And if the righteous is scarcely saved.** The teaching of the last verse is strengthened by this quotation from the Greek Bible of Prov. xi. 31. **Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?** There is no reference here to the doctrine of *annihilation*, as if this verse simply

meant that there would be no existence for the wicked after the judgment.<sup>1</sup>

19. **Wherefore.** A summing up of the whole argument. **Let them also that suffer according to the will of God.** Believers are to comfort themselves that their sufferings are for a wise purpose, to prove their faith (iv. 12), thereby to glorify God (iv. 16), in accordance with God's will. **Commit their souls in well-doing.** For unto this have they been created in Christ Jesus (Eph. ii. 10), and "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon them" (iv. 14). **Unto a faithful Creator.** Who has not only created (mediately) our souls, but created them anew in Christ when we were regenerated. GERHARD: "As the most *faithful* Creator, God *will* preserve His saints, as the most *mighty*, He *can* do it."

<sup>1</sup> Those who hold what is known as the doctrine of *conditional immortality* or *annihilationism*, maintain that man is not naturally immortal, but that *immortality* is the gift of Christ to *believers*, and that therefore believers only attain to an immortal life or unceasing existence, and that all unbelievers are annihilated. The advocates of this view (Olshausen, Nitzsch, Rothe, etc., among the German theologians; Locke, Coleridge, Watts, Whately, Dale of Birmingham, Edward White, and others of England), are by no means agreed as to the time of this annihilation, some maintaining that the unbeliever is blotted out of existence at death, while others maintain that the annihilation of the wicked takes place at the judgment. It is true, as our Lord taught (John xvii. 3), that *life eternal*, immortality in its supreme and perfect sense, can be enjoyed only by those who spiritually know God and believe in Christ,—it is a gift of grace enjoyed by saints alone,—yet *unending existence* is in multiplied passages asserted of the sinner and the wicked as truly as of those who are eternally saved through faith. Nothing short of absolute immortality and unending existence for the wicked as truly as for the righteous will adequately interpret such solemn declarations as Matt. xxv. 41, 46; Mark iii. 29; ix. 48; John iii. 36; v. 28, 29; Rom. ii. 7-9; 2 Thess. i. 9; Jude 7; Rev. xiv. 11; xx. 10. There is no foundation whatever in the Bible for the doctrine of the annihilation of the unbeliever. It is a wild speculation of perverted reason, not able even to stand the test of a true philosophy.

## CHAPTER V.

### 19. AN EXHORTATION TO THE PRESBYTERS.

1-4. The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

1. **The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder.** The office of the *elder* was taken from the synagogue, and retained in all Jewish Christian congregations as well as introduced into the Gentile Christian assemblies. We find elders at Antioch (Acts xi. 30), at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 2, 4; xxi. 18; James v. 14), and in the congregations of Asia Minor, as here. These elders were not always, yet doubtless often, those oldest in years, but rather the most experienced and matured among the converted members of the Church. They are also called *bishops* or overseers (Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5, 7; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8). They were the pastors of the flock, appointed by the Apostles, with the concurrence of the congregations (Acts xiv. 23; Tit. i. 5). It was only after the Apostolic age that the office of bishop and elder or presbyter was gradually separated. During the lifetime of the Apostles, these wielded the supreme direction of the Congregations, but they put themselves on a level with the elders, hence Peter calls himself here

a *fellow-elder*, and John describes himself as an *elder* (2 John 1; 3 John 1). (See also notes on James v. 14.) **And a witness of the sufferings of Christ.** Peter was a *witness* in a double sense: he had been an *eye-witness* of His sufferings, and had borne witness by his preaching the death and cross of Christ (Acts i. 22; ii. 23). We may add that Peter also bore witness by enduring sufferings for Christ's sake. **Who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.** Because he himself was a partaker of the sufferings of Christ, he knew that he would also be a partaker of that future glory which shall be revealed in all those who are Christ's (Rom. viii. 17, 18; Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2; 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14). Note that Peter bases his exhortation on three facts of his own Christian experience.

2. **Tend the flock.** The figure of the Church of God as consisting of shepherds and the flock is common to the Bible (Jer. iii. 15; xxiii. 1-4; Ezek. xxxiv. 2; John x. 12; xxi. 16; Acts xx. 28). This *tending, pasturing*, does not refer simply to the preaching of the Gospel, but applies to everything which is to be done by the minister of God as the *Pastor* or shepherd of his flock for the welfare of his people and of the individual soul. It unites into one act the whole work of teaching, feeding, watching, leading, and guarding. **Of God.** The flock does not belong to those who are to tend it, but to God. **Which is among you.** That which is committed *to you*, in *your* parish. This clause makes this exhortation *personal*. **Exercising the oversight.** *Overseeing*, one word in Greek, referring to the office of the elders in caring for the congregation in the matter of Government. The word *bishop* comes from this Greek verb. This *overseeing* defines more closely how the pastor is to fulfil his duty of *tending*. Just as Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop of all souls

(ii. 25), so the true pastor is a true shepherd and bishop of the souls committed to his care. On this office of oversight compare Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 16; Tit. i. 9. **Not of constraint.** We here have a full description of the nature of this oversight, and in three clauses, in each both negatively and positively, Peter warns against three great sins of the pastoral office. The office of the ministry is the highest of all vocations and ought not to be entered upon *of constraint*, from outward motives, by force, by outward persuasion, or from worldly motives, but from pure and holy motives. **But willingly.** "No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments, unless he be regularly called" (*Augs. Conf.* Art. xiv.), but the *inner* call is also necessary. Every one should give evidences of this inner call, which consists partly in the state of the inner life, and partly in the necessary fitness for the office. Every true pastor must for himself have the consciousness within him that the ministerial office is the work above all else which God has given him to do. He ought with Paul to be able to exclaim, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17). His aim is to realize that he is fulfilling the will of God with reference to himself, **according unto God.** This applies as well to the exercise of, and continuance in, the pastoral office, as to his entrance upon it. **Nor yet for filthy lucre.** He who exercises his office for the love of gain commits the greatest of sins,—such service is one of the greatest abominations in the sight of God. (Read Isa. lvi. 11; Jer. vi. 13; Ezek. xxxiv. 1–10; Micah iii. 5, 11; Tit. i. 7, 11.) "Where the love of gain reigns, the shepherds are apt to become hirelings, yea, even wolves." **But of a ready mind.** In Greek one word. We are to exercise the pastoral office out of love to Christ, taking

inward delight in the saving of souls and the preaching of the Gospel. LUTHER: "Gladly, from the bottom of the heart."

3. **Neither as lording it over.** Pastors are not to exercise authority over the congregations committed to their charge as lords (Matt. xx. 25, 26), offering violence and abuse to those who may oppose, and laying stress on their dignity and position, but imitate the example of the chief Shepherd and Bishop (ii. 25; v. 4; Matt. xx. 26-28). **The charge allotted to you.** One word in Greek, in the plural. The word *kleros* originally means the *portion* of inheritance apportioned to any one by lot, then the *portion* assigned to any one, whether it be an office (as *here*), or a possession and inheritance as in Acts xxvi. 18; Col. i. 12. The congregations are here called *kleroi* (the charges allotted to you), because they were assigned to the different elders as the *portion* of the Church in which to exercise their official duties. To interpret *kleroi* in the sense of *the clergy*, as advocated by Roman Catholic expositors, is contrary to all scriptural usage. Pastors are not to domineer over the congregation, nor, on the other hand, ought the congregation to domineer over the pastor (Heb. xiii. 17). **But making yourselves ensamples to the flock.** The purest obedience (Heb. xiii. 17) is obtained by example (BENGEL). "The life should command, and the tongue persuade" (AUGUSTINE). Paul lays great stress on the example set by the pastor (2 Thess. iii. 9; Phil. iii. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. ii. 7).

4. **And when the chief Shepherd.** In ii. 25 Christ is called the Shepherd, in Heb. xiii. 20 the *great* Shepherd, to whom the elders, as well as the flock which they tend, are subject. **Shall be manifested.** At His visible return, at the time of the Second Advent (1 Pet. i. 5, 7; Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2). **Ye shall receive the crown of**



**glory that fadeth not away.** (See notes on James i. 12.) Scripture speaks of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 8), the crown of life (James i. 12 ; ii. 10), and *here* of the crown of glory. These are but different aspects of the glory of the eternal life and of that crown (Rev. iii. 11), which the believer will receive in its fulness and perfection, after the resurrection and consummation of all things.

## 20. GENERAL EXHORTATIONS TO ALL.

5-11. Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another : for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time ; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. Be sober, be watchful : your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour : whom withstand stedfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world. And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

5. **Likewise, ye younger.** That is, the younger members of the congregation in general (so Luther, Calvin, Gerhard, De Wette, Keil, Huther, and others), not younger assistants of the presbyters or elders (so Weiss, Schott, Brueckner, Cook, Alford, and others). **Be subject unto the elder.** Translate *unto the elders*. Not *the elder*, i. e. the aged members of the Church, as in Revised Version, but the word is here used in the same sense as in verse 1, designating the presbyters or elders of the congregation. A part is here taken for the whole,—not only ought the *younger* members of the congregation be subject to the presbyter or pastor, but all of the flock (Heb. xiii. 17). In the first six verses of this chapter the Apostle lays stress on three things : (1) what the pres-

byters, or bishops, or pastors owe to the congregation (v. 1-4); (2) what the congregation owes to the pastors (v. 5*a*); and (3) what all without distinction owe to one another (v. 5*b*, 6). **Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another.** The Greek verb used is very suggestive. It has reference to the white apron which was fastened to the girdle of slaves. The thought is, by putting on, wrapping one's self round with, humiliation, show your subjection one to another. Paul gives similar exhortations (Rom. xii. 16; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 12; Phil. ii. 3). **For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.** A quotation from the Greek Bible of Prov. iii. 34. (See notes on James iv. 6.) **AUGUSTINE:** "There are, as it were, two hands of God under which we must humble ourselves: the one abases the proud, the other exalts the humble."

**6. Humble yourselves therefore.** (See notes on James iv. 10.) Peter here refers to the submissive and humble endurance of afflictions. (See *next* verse.) **Under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you.** This refers to the power of God which he exercises in judgment (iv. 17), and which will bring about their exaltation **in due time.** In God's appointed time, either in this life, when trial has wrought its perfect work (James i. 3, 4), or if not here, then the glory shall surely come at the time of the judgment.

**7. Casting all your anxiety upon him.** After the Greek Bible from Ps. lv. 22. The care and anxiety referred to are caused by suffering and trial. (Compare Matt. vi. 25; Phil. iv. 6.) **Because he careth for you.** What consolation to the afflicted believer, for God has taken it upon Himself to care for you (Matt. x. 30; Luke xxi. 18; John x. 28, 29; Rom. viii. 38, 39).

**8. Be sober, be watchful.** (See notes on 1 Pet. iv. 7;

i. 13.) Temperance of body and mind and watchfulness are inseparably united, and are especially necessary if we wish to remain faithful in the time of great trials (verse 9). See 1 Thess. v. 5-11, where Paul gives us a hint in what this watching consists. We must watch our hearts, our lives, our faith, our love, and our hope. **Your adversary the devil.** The names given to this enemy of God and man describe his character. He is known as *Satan*, that is, *Adversary*, because he is the great opposer of God and man, and *Devil*, that is, *Slanderer*, because he slanders God to man (Gen. iii. 4, 5), and man to God (Job. i. 9-11; ii. 4, 5; Rev. xii. 10). Christ, however, has broken the power of the devil, and those who believe on the Son, and trust and live in Christ, are freed from his power, and are able to resist him. (See notes on James iv. 7.) The devil does not abide in his own place but is still "the prince of this world" (John xii. 31; xvi. 11) and is very active on earth among men, and will continue to be so until towards the Final Consummation. (See Rev. xx. 1-3, 8, 10.) **As a roaring lion.** Possibly with reference to Ps. xxii. 13. Under this striking image the Apostle describes the temptations which ever beset the Christian, especially in times of persecution. The roaring of the lion, which brings terror and dismay, finds its counterpart in the menacings and anathemas of furious Jews and mad heathens, inciting to persecution. It is the special work of the devil to incite such persecutions. **Walking about, seeking.** Like a lion, hungry and lusting for his prey. There may be a reference to Job i. 7; ii. 2. The devil can do no harm to those who are faithful to their Christian calling, and who abide in Christ, for such "the evil one toucheth not" (1 John v. 18), but he is on the watch for the indifferent and lukewarm Christian, **whom he may devour**, by leading to unfaithfulness. The figure is very

bold, *to devour, to swallow greedily*, like a toad swallowing a fly, or a serpent a worm. The devil devours indifferent and weak Christians "by sapping their faith, by encouraging them in self-reliance, by leading them to tempt God by presumption, or by inciting them to do evil that good may come" (SADLER).

9. **Whom withstand.** For the devil can be resisted. (See notes on James iv. 7.) **Stedfast in your (the) faith.** Firm in the faith. GERHARD: "Victory over Satan lies in faith, because faith unites us to Christ, the victor. By faith the devil is driven to flight as is the lion by fire." (See 1 Cor. vi. 17; Eph. iii. 16; vi. 16.) **Knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished** (*being accomplished*) **in your brethren** (*brotherhood*). This is to encourage them to endure patiently, as such sufferings are common to all Christians, and not only to the Saints of the Dispersion. **Who are in the world.** From which the Christian can expect nothing else but enmity, hatred, persecution, temptation, trial, and suffering.

10. **And the God of all grace.** In 2 Cor. i. 3 Paul speaks also of God the Father, as "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." For the very reason that God is the author of all grace, is He also the God of all comfort to afflicted believers. **Who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while.** The contrast is between the *eternal glory* and the suffering for *a little while*. **Shall himself perfect** (*restore*). The *same* God who has called you shall make you complete and perfect in everything, "so that no *defect* remain in you" (BENGEL). (Compare 1 Thess. iii. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. i. 6; Heb. xiii. 21.) **Stablish.** "So that nothing shall cause you to shake" (BENGEL). (Compare 1 Thess. iii. 13; Rom. xvi. 25; Heb. xiii. 9; James v. 8.) **Strengthen you.** "So that ye may overcome every

'opposing force. Language worthy of *Peter* (a rock)" (BENGEL). He thus confirms and strengthens his brethren (Luke xxii. 32).

11. **To him be the dominion for ever and ever** (*unto the ages of the ages*). **Amen.** A similar doxology to that of iv. 11, which see.

## 21. SALUTATION AND BENEDICTION.

12 14. By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account *him*, I have written unto you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God : stand ye fast therein. She that is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, saluteth you ; and *so doth* Mark my son. Salute one another with a kiss of love.

Peace be unto you all that are in Christ.

12. **By Silvanus.** The well-known companion of Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts xv. 22—xviii. 5). Luke always calls him Silas, and the last record we have of him in the Acts is when he meets Paul at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5). We do not know at what time he made his journey to the East to meet Peter. **Our (the) faithful brother.** "This is said to assure his readers, and the churches at large, of the genuineness of the Epistle. It would be brought to them by Silvanus, *the faithful brother*, who would certify them from whom it came" (WORDSWORTH). As Silas accompanied Paul in his second missionary tour through Syria, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Galatia, to Troas, it is highly probable that he was known by many of these Jewish-Christian congregations to which Peter wrote this letter. **As I account him.** This strengthens the confidence of the churches in Silvanus. **I have written unto you.** That is, *by Silvanus . . . I have written*, not *by him* as an amanuensis, but in the sense *by him* as the *bearer* of this letter, as in the subscriptions to many of the Pauline Epistles, and as

in Acts xv. 23. There is no reference here to some former letter which has been lost, as some have thought. **Briefly.** Peter calls attention to three things: (1) Silvanus is the bearer of the letter; (2) he has perfect confidence in him; (3) the letter which he brings is a *short* one. It is simply an *exhortation* and a *testimony*, **exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God.** The contents of the testimony is, that the grace in which they stood is the *true* grace of God. **Stand ye fast therein.** This is the summing up of the substance of all former exhortations.

13. **She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you.** This does not refer to Peter's wife, as some would interpret (Bengel, Mayerhoff, Alford, Plumptre, and others), for there is no reference to 1 Cor. ix. 5. We must interpret with the great majority of both ancient and modern commentators, *she*, "*the church*." By Babylon is meant the city on the Euphrates. (See Introduction.) **And so doth Mark my son.** That is, his spiritual son, the well-known companion of Paul, "John, whose surname was Mark" (Acts xii. 12, 25). The mother of Mark seems to have been intimately acquainted with Peter (Acts xii. 12), and we have a right to infer that Mark owed his conversion to Christianity to Peter, who evidently calls Mark *his son*, in the same spiritual sense in which Paul gives this name to Titus and to Timothy (Tit. i. 4; 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 2).

14. **Salute one another with a kiss of love.** Paul uses a similar expression, "with a holy kiss" (1 Thess. v. 26; Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12). This method of greeting each other with a holy kiss was a universal custom observed by the Christians of the Early Church. It is most likely that this "holy kiss" at

first was given promiscuously, without restriction as to sex or rank, especially at the time of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but very early this custom was restricted to persons of the same sex. *The Apostolical Constitutions* supply the earliest example of this restriction: "Let the clergy salute the bishop, the men of the laity salute the men, the women the women" (viii. 2). See Art. *Kiss* in *Dict. of Christ. Antiquities* (Smith and Cheetham). **Peace be unto you all.** Paul's favorite benediction is "Grace be with you" (Gal. v. 18; Rom. xvi. 20; etc.). Peace is the result of the reception of the grace of God. **That are in Christ.** For there can be no true peace except for those who live in union with Christ.

COLLECT.

O Almighty God, who hast instructed Thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles: Give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of Thy Holy Gospel; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

## EXCURSUS I.

*Peter as the Rock.* In the interpretation of Matt. xvi. 17-19, the question at issue is, to what do the words "upon this rock" refer? (1) Some answer, *to Christ Himself* (so finally Augustine, Wordsworth, James Morison and others). This interpretation expresses indeed a great truth, for Christ is the true Rock, the one and only foundation of the Church, and "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11), and no one lays greater stress upon this than Peter himself (1 Pet. ii. 6-8), but certainly such an interpretation does not give the simple and primary meaning of our Saviour's Words. (2) A second view is that it signifies *the faith of Peter's Confession*, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (so already the great majority of the Early Fathers, and most Protestants, since the Lutheran Reformation). This interpretation also brings to light a great and glorious truth, that the Church of God is built upon the doctrine preached by the Apostles and Prophets, but surely this is not an exact interpretation of what Christ says. (3) A third view is that which is held by Roman Catholic theologians in general, and by the Church of Rome as an article of faith, that the word *rock* refers to Peter in his person, including the Popes of Rome in perpetuity as Peter's successors. Of this perversion of the teaching of this passage PLUMPTRE very forcibly remarks: "The interpretation which has assumed (a) that this promise made the Apostle himself the *rock* on which the Church was built, (b) that it conveyed to him a permanent supremacy and infallible au-



thority, (c) that the supremacy and infallibility were both transmitted by him to his successors, (d) that those successors are to be found in the Bishops of Rome and in them only,—hardly deserves a notice, except as an instance of a fantastic development worthy of the foremost place in any exhibition of the monstrosities of exegesis" (*Comm. on 1 Peter*, p. 14). (4) A fourth view refers indeed the passage to Peter, but as the representative of the Apostles, as professing in their name the true faith, and as entrusted with laying the foundation of the Church. MEYER (on Matt. xvi. 18): "There can be no doubt whatever that the *primacy* among the Apostles is here assigned to Peter, inasmuch as Christ singles *him* out as that one in particular whose Apostolic labors will, in virtue of the *steadfast faith* for which he is peculiarly distinguished, be the means of securing, so far as human effort can do so (Rev. xxi. 14; Gal. ii. 9), the permanence and stability of the Church which Jesus is about to found, and to extend more and more in the world. . . . This primacy must be impartially conceded, though without involving those inferences which Romanists have founded upon it; for Peter's successors are not for a moment thought of by Jesus, neither can the Popes claim to be his successors, nor was Peter himself ever bishop of Rome, nor had he any more to do with the founding of the church at Rome than the Apostle Paul." So also BENGEL (on Matt. xvi. 18): "Unquestionably the Church is built upon the Apostles (Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14), inasmuch as they were both the first to believe themselves, and the means of leading others to believe. And herein Peter exercised a certain prerogative as chief, without any prejudice to the equality of power in all the Apostles; for he was both the first to gain over many Jews (Acts ii.), and the first to admit the Gentiles to

Gospel privileges (Acts x.). Besides the commands, 'Stablish thy brethren' (Luke xvii. 32), and 'Feed My lambs,' 'Feed My sheep' (John xxi. 15, 17), were specially given to him. And there is great significance in the fact, that the glorious name *Rock* (elsewhere generally assigned to Christ Himself, 1 Cor x. 4; etc.), is here attributed to Peter, who is always first named, and placed in the foremost rank in the lists of the Apostles (Matt. x. 2). And all this may be safely affirmed; *for what has this to do with Rome.*" (So also Huther, Weiss, Stier, Alford, Geikie, Farrar, Cook, Mansel, Schaff, Gloag, Broadus, and others.) This can be the only true interpretation of this passage. No other explanation would probably at the present day be offered by Protestant commentators, but for the fact that the obvious meaning has been so abused by the Roman Church to the support of their theory. But BROADUS rightly remarks: "The Protestant reluctance to admit that the *rock* means Peter really plays into the hands of the Romish controversialists. It favors the impression that conceding that point would be conceding all that the Romanist claims. But grant that the rock is Peter, and consider what the Roman Catholic will then have to show in order to establish the claims of the Papacy. (1) He must show that Peter *alone* was to be the founder of Christianity. Of this there is no evidence. . . . (a) Against it we find various express declarations, especially Eph. ii. 20; (b) the history in Acts and in the Epistles is also opposed to this notion (especially in Acts xv.; also in Gal. ii.); (c) the promise as to binding and loosing here made to Peter, is made in Matt. xviii. 18 as to action of all the Apostles or any church; (d) this saying is omitted by Mark and Luke, though they give what precedes and what follows it. Now according to the Romanist view they have

omitted the very heart of the passage, and well-nigh the most important thing Jesus ever said. (2) He must show that Peter not only was the *sole founder* of Christianity, but that he was viceregent of God and the sovereign of all Christians. . . . But the whole teaching of the N. T. is against it. (3) He must show that this supposed authority of Peter's was *transmissible*, of which there is no particle of evidence in the N. T. . . . (4) He must show that Peter lived and died at Rome, which is probably true but not certain; and that he was, rather than Paul, the head of the church at Rome, of which there is no evidence at all. . . . (5) He must show that Peter's supposed transmissible authority was actually transmitted to the leading official of the church at Rome. . . . Notice too, that on the Papal theory the great Apostle John was, after the death of Peter, completely subject to the bishop of Rome."

## EXCURSUS II.

*The Descent of the Soul of Christ into Hades at the Time of His Death* (Acts ii. 22-36). We here must briefly discuss a difficult topic, and it behooves us to approach with all reverence the mysteries of God's revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ truly died; His soul (and spirit) was separated from His body; His body was laid in the grave; His soul, separated from the body, went into the invisible world, whither all departed souls of the dead went. The invisible world into which all souls went at death, *before* Christ's resurrection, is known in Scripture as Sheol (O. T.) or Hades (N. T.). It embraced two parts, the place or state of bliss, and the place or state of misery. Its generic name was Hades, and the soul going into either part would be in Hades. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) Hades is the name specifically given to the place or state of misery, and Paradise to the place or state of bliss; but both of these places or states belonged to the invisible world, and made up the generic Hades. The soul of Christ, separated at death from the body, went into the invisible world, and into the generic Hades, but into that part of the generic Hades called Paradise, where Abraham was, where Lazarus was occupying a place of honor near Abraham, and where the soul of the thief on the cross met Jesus that very day (Luke xxiii. 43). This descent of the soul of Christ into Hades was the result of death, the last stage of Christ's humiliation. If Christ was a true man, if Christ's soul was a true human soul, it was necessary that His soul should pass through all the states that every true human soul passes.

Peter declares (Acts ii. 22-36) that David prophesied of Christ when he said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption" (verse 27), and that he "spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (verse 31), for "God did raise up this Jesus, whereof we all are witnesses" (verse 32). That is, the soul of Christ was not forsaken or abandoned to Sheol, to Hades (Ps. xvi. 10). Christ had voluntarily given up His life for our sakes, of His own free will had subjected Himself to the power of death and of Satan, because He took upon Himself our sins, our guilt, and our punishment, in order "that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14). But God loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that Christ should be held under the power of death or Satan (Acts ii. 24). His quickening and resurrection were proof that He triumphed over death and Satan. He met death, His soul as that of a true man passed over under the power of death and Satan, but He was not forsaken to it. He came forth victorious from Hades as its conqueror. The very fact that the soul of Christ was not abandoned to Hades was preliminary to another great triumphal act of Christ, which followed after Christ's revivification, and it is to this triumphal act of the Risen Christ that Peter refers in 1 Pet. iii. 19-20 and 1 Pet. iv. 6.

## EXCURSUS III.

*The Descent of Christ, the Risen God-Man, into Hades.*

As has been seen we closely connect 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 and 1 Pet. iv. 6. The history of the interpretation of these two passages would fill a large volume. A brief history is given by Steiger, Huther, Alford, Wiesinger, Mombert (in Lange-Fronmueller) and Gloag. The following outline of the various views held by commentators may be of interest to the student :

A. Christ preached *personally* in Hades.1. As to the *time*.

(a) After His death, in the spirit, before His body was made alive.

So Bengel, Weiss, Lechler, Schmid, Fronmueller, Alford, Wordsworth, and others.

(b) After His body was made alive, with soul and body re-united.

So De Wette, Brueckner, Schott, Huther, Zezschwitz, Keil, Luther, Thomasius, Quenstedt, Hollaz, Hutter, Baier, Buddeus, Krauth, and others.

2. As to the *Purpose* of this Preaching.

(a) To free the O. T. saints, referring also 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20 to this event.

So Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Gregory the Great, and the Greek Church, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, most Roman Catholic theologians, Zwingle, Calvin (in his commentaries), Bishop Browne, and others.

(b) To free those who repented at the last moment, at the time of the deluge.

So Bengel, Horsley, Estius, Bellarmine, Osiander, Hutter, Luther (Genesis, 1536; on Hosea iv. 2, in 1545), and others.

(c) To announce to the ungodly souls their condemnation.

So Flacius, Calovius, Buddeus, Hollaz, Luther (in some places), Zezschwitz, Keil, and others.

(d) To the wicked and the good, bringing condemnation to the wicked, consolation to the good.

So Athanasius, Ambrose, Erasmus, Calvin (*Institutes*), and others.

(e) To the disobedient of Noah's time, giving them another opportunity for salvation.

With some variations, so De Wette, Brueckner, Huther, Weiss, Wiesinger, Reuss, Fronmueller, Alford, Wordsworth, Plumptre, Farrar, Cook, Gloag, and others. This view is generally connected with the idea that some accepted this new offer of salvation.

B. Christ preached *through others*.

1. *Through Noah*, to the unbelieving at the time of the deluge.

With some variations, so Augustine, Bede, Thomas Aquinas, Beza, Scaliger, Pearson, Barrow, Leighton, Wichelhaus, Schweizer, Besser, Hofmann, and others.

2. *Through the Apostles*, to the unbelieving world, *spirits in prison* denoting the spiritual bondage of Jews and Gentiles.

So Socinus, Grotius, Schöttgen, Bishop Burnett, Luther (with much uncertainty in 1 Peter, 1523), and others.

## EXCURSUS IV.

*The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Purgatory.* The Romish doctrine of Purgatory implies that the souls of Roman Catholic believers are not fully saved in this life, but shall finally attain a complete salvation in the *Intermediate State*, by a purifying process going on in the soul after death. But this doctrine cannot be deduced from 1 Cor. iii. 13; Matt. iii. 11; nor from 1 Pet. i. 7. There is no foundation for it in Matt. xii. 32; v. 26; nor in these two passages of Peter (1 Pet. iv. 6; iii. 19, 20). Protestantism, except in its Romanizing tendencies, has universally repudiated this doctrine of Purgatory as an erroneous doctrine unwarranted by the Word of God, and it maintains that in its practical application in connection with prayers and masses for the dead, it is a most dangerous delusion. The origin of this doctrine can be traced to three things: (1) to the peculiar view held by some of the Early Fathers with reference to the reformatory character of future punishment, (2) to the false conceptions of heaven current among some, and (3) to the speculative difficulties involved in the instantaneous transplanting of the imperfect believer into the presence of God. But the testimony of the Apostles as to the immediate entrance of the redeemed at death on their heavenly state is very explicit. (See 2 Cor. v. 6-8; Heb. xii. 22-24; Phil. i. 23.) This is also the definite teaching of John. Believers do not indeed immediately receive their *full and final* glory, which they do not attain until after the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection, but the souls of believers



enter immediately into heaven and are with God. This is distinctly implied in Rev. vi. 9-11 ; xx. 4-6 ; vii. 9-17 ; xiv. 1-5. We grant indeed that the soul is not released from sin on account of its separation from the body, as if sin had its origin and home only in the body ;—we grant that although justification, through the grace of God in Christ, releases us from the guilt of our sin, the root of sin itself abides in us up to the very moment of death ;—we grant that in the new life of sanctification the power of sin must become weaker and weaker, but it is equally true that sin cannot be entirely eradicated so long as we are in this life ;—we grant too that death itself, which is the occasion of the separation of the soul and body, is not the purifying means through which the soul is cleansed, for death is but a punishment brought upon man by his sin and guilt ;—but we cannot grant, according to Scripture, that this cleansing of the soul takes place after death brought about by punishment or suffering in purgatory. Let it be done as it may in the powerful working of God's grace, it is by no means effected by a fire or purifying process which is needed to assist the effect of Holy Baptism, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the blood of the Son of God ; it is by no means brought about through an expiatory suffering on the part of the soul, which is needed to assist the saving power of the reconciling suffering of Christ, as if Christ's suffering and resurrection was not sufficient to effect our salvation. This is indeed a great mystery, but we can rest assured that this complete purification with reference to the believer takes place at the very moment of death, when the soul appears in the presence of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost. The soul becomes purified by the light of the glory of the Holy God.

## EXCURSUS V.

*The Doctrine of the Universal Restoration of the Wicked.*

There is no doctrine which contradicts the teaching of the New Testament, in a more unwarrantable manner, than the doctrine of Universal Restoration. There are four theories which maintain, on various grounds, that a change of character, resulting in a change of condition of the soul, is possible after death. These theories have been very aptly designated (see Morris, *Is there Salvation after Death?* 1887), as (1) the Evolutionary theory; (2) the Disciplinary theory; (3) the Purgatorial theory; and (4) the Probationary theory. The third theory has already been discussed in the preceding Excursus.

The *Evolutionary* theory maintains that the soul after death may change its character, and therefore its condition, through power inherent in the soul itself. This view regards sin simply as an incident of imperfect training and draws no distinction between education and regeneration. After death, it maintains, all who have neglected or rejected salvation, and all the heathen, by *innate* energy will correct their evil tendencies, and turn their hearts to God and become holy. Such a theory is not only an utter denial of the truth of revelation, but must be rejected by reason itself on rational grounds.

The second, or *Disciplinary*, theory holds that there is a *universal restoration* of all unsaved souls, effected after death, by a special training or discipline. Some of the Early Fathers, as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, held this view, laying special stress upon an erroneous interpretation of Acts iii. 21 and 1 Cor. iii. 12-15. It was held by

Schleiermacher and his School, and favored by such writers as John Foster, Milman, Stopford Brooke, Cox, Jukes, Kingsley, and others. American Universalism lays special stress upon this theory. But such a view is directly opposed to the plain teaching of the Scriptures. The passages quoted by the Universalists and the Restorationists in favor of their views are John iii. 17 (but read iii. 18, 36); John vi. 37 (but read v. 28, 29); John xii. 32 (but read xii. 36, 46, 48); Acts iii. 21 (but read 1 Cor. xv. 24-28); Rom. v. 18 (but read v. 17); Rom. xi. 32 (but read 2 Cor. v. 15; Gal. iii. 22); 1 Cor. xv. 22, 28 (but read 1 Cor. xv. 23-28); Eph. i. 10 (but read i. 12, 13); Col. i. 20 (but read i. 23); Phil. ii. 9-11 (but read ii. 12, 13); 1 Tim. ii. 4-6 (but read 2 Thess. i. 6-9). They utterly overlook and deny the plain and most decisive testimony of such passages as Matt. x. 28; xii. 32; xxv. 41, 46; Mark iii. 29; ix. 48; John iii. 36; v. 28, 29; Acts xxiv. 15; 2 Thess. i. 9; Rom. ii. 5-9; Phil. iii. 19; Heb. x. 27; 2 Pet. iii. 7; Jude 7; Rev. xiv. 10; xxi. 8. The Bible most explicitly teaches that this life is absolutely the only bridge whereby man may pass from spiritual death to eternal life.

The fourth, or *Probationary* theory, advocates the view that there is hope for repentance after death, and that an offer of salvation is still made to the unbelieving souls after death, through a preaching of the Gospel. Morris, in the work already referred to, gives us a very able discussion of this subject, whose presentation we mainly follow. There is a great diversity of opinion among those who accept the Probationary theory, (1) as to the method by which this Gospel is to be applied; (2) as to the persons to whom it shall be applied; and (3) as to the practical result following such application. We find traces of this view already in the writings of Clement of Alex-

andria, and in modern times it is advocated by Dorner, Nitzsch, Mueller, Fronmueller, and by the speculative German theologians in general, by Martensen, by the English school of Maurice, Farrar, Plumptre, Alford, Stanley, and others, and has a large following in this country. But such a theory is purely speculative. It is contrary to Scripture, and opposed to the unanimous teaching of the Church during all ages. The principles of interpretation employed, and the rationalistic tendencies displayed are subversive of the most important evangelical doctrines. If this theory were true the whole of Christian doctrine as taught in the Bible and believed by the Church would have to be reconstructed. This erroneous theory has its origin in a false sentimentality, and in a one-sided knowledge of the scheme of redemption, and in a false and strained exegesis. Morris has made a valuable collection of the *Seven* groups of Scripture passages upon which those who teach *Future Probation* lay stress.

(1) A group of six passages (Luke xix. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4-6; 1 John ii. 2; John iii. 16, 17; Acts ii. 39; Luke xiv. 21), in which the fulness and freeness of salvation is set forth. These passages do indeed shed a divine glory over the entire plan of salvation, but to infer from them that salvation is not limited to this life, and that there is an opportunity given after death, seems like trifling with the divine testimony. That the plan of salvation is limited to earth is apparent from the warnings and solemn injunctions accompanying the offer of salvation. (See especially such passages as Matt. xi. 28; xvi. 24-27; Luke xvi. 22-31; Luke xix. 41, 42; John v. 40; vii. 37, 38; xii. 35, 36; Gal. vi. 7, 8; Rom. ii. 6-11; 2 Cor. v. 10; vi. 2; ix. 6; 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18; etc.)

(2) A second group of six passages (Matt. xii. 31, 32;

xviii. 21-35 ; Mark iii. 28, 29 ; John iii. 16 ; Rom. v. 8 ; 1 John iv. 9), in which God's willingness to forgive sin is set forth. Such comforting passages indeed glorify the Bible on almost every page, and God is indeed willing to forgive, but there are conditions of salvation, and the Word of God very plainly tells us what these conditions are, and that forgiveness and salvation are to be received on earth and in this life.

(3) In the third group they see a hint that punishment may not be eternal. Apart from their main argument that *aionios* does not mean eternal, everlasting, *unceasing*, they lay stress upon Matt. v. 25, 26 ; xviii. 12-14 ; Luke xii. 47, 48 ; xv. 11-32 ; Rom. ix. 15-23 ; Heb. xii. 11. But what Christ and Paul wish to teach is that retribution hereafter is in just proportion to our spiritual opportunities, and that everything depends on our character in this life. With reference to their sophistical argument based on the word *aionios*, it is sufficient to state, if eternal punishment is limited to a certain period of duration, so also must eternal life. But Scripture and the analogy of faith are altogether opposed to such a false interpretation,—for there is an eternity of sin (Mark iii. 29 ; Matt. xxv. 41), as well as an eternity of punishment (Mark ix. 43 ; 2 Thess. i. 8, 9 ; Rev. xiv. 11 ; xx. 10).

(4) From a fourth group of passages they infer that no judgment of the soul takes place at death, and that therefore forgiveness is possible up to the time of the final judgment. Some (falsely interpreting Matt. vii. 21-24 ; Luke xiii. 25-29) even maintain that the judgment is not universal, limited to those who have professed to be disciples. But the universality of the final judgment is most distinctly taught in Matt. xi. 22-24 ; xxv. 32 ; Acts xvii. 31 ; Rom. ii. 5 ; 2 Cor. v. 10 ; Rev. xx. 12, 13. They also have a wrong conception of the relation of the final

judgment to the individual judgment which comes to every soul at death. The last or general judgment is rather an official confirmation of what has already taken place for each individual at death. It is the full manifestation and vindication of the divine scheme of redemption. The souls of the dead, both of the evil and good, are not kept in an *indeterminate* state. The teaching of Luke xvi. 19-31 is very clear, so is Stephen's testimony (Acts vii. 55, 59), and that of Paul (2 Cor. v. 6-8). Probation ends at death (Matt. vii. 26, 27; Mark viii. 34-38; Heb. x. 26-31).

(5) In the fifth group we find especially 1 Peter iii. 18-20 and 1 Peter iv. 6. We have already seen there is no foundation for their theory in these passages.

(6) They cite a sixth class of passages, which they say, in a general way, favors the idea of a probation after death. They actually press into service Luke xvi. 19-31, quote the restoration of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke vii. 11-15) as an actual instance of such a probation, and lay much stress upon the friendly allusion of Paul to Onesiphorus (2 Tim. i. 16-18; iv. 9). That in this last passage we have authority for and an example of prayer for the dead can by no means be proved, although the Roman Church lays great stress on this passage, and it is noticeable that Maurice, Farrar, Plumptre, Newman Smyth, and others, in substance, accept this false doctrine of prayers for the dead.

(7) In the last series of passages which they cite, they maintain, that it is taught that *unbelief*, the active rejection of Christ, is the only adequate ground of condemnation. They quote Mark xvi. 14-16; John iii. 18, 36; xvi. 9; Rom. x. 9-12; Eph. iv. 18; 2 Peter iii. 3, 4; 1 John iv. 3. They maintain that there can be no condemnation to those who had no opportunity to know Christ in this

life, and who could not therefore reject Him. But the teaching of Scripture is very explicit. Where there is no life in Christ there is death and the manifestation of the wrath of God (John iii. 36). Salvation is only found by faith in Christ. The teaching of John iii. 5, 6; 1 John v. 11, 12; Eph. ii. 3, 12, 13; Rom. ii. 11-16, is decisive. As long as men are not in saving contact with Christ they are under condemnation, they are under sin, the energy and purity of the divine holiness, the zeal of His holy will, manifests itself upon them in the form of divine wrath. There are indeed different degrees of guilt, and, therefore, different degrees of punishment, but all are under condemnation. Paul lays as much stress on the real guilt of those who have sinned without law, as of those who have sinned under the law (Rom. ii. 11-16), and his unanswerable argument is that all men are sinful, and as such are under condemnation, and therefore need salvation.

## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

TO THE

### SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

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1. *The Canonicity of the Epistle.* The right of this Epistle to belong to the Canon of the New Testament has been questioned by many modern scholars<sup>1</sup> on the ground (1) that there is not sufficient external evidence to warrant its reception, and (2) that the proof of its genuineness is unsatisfactory. The external evidence for the early recognition of 2 Peter is certainly weaker than in the case of the other books known as the General Epistles, but this can be explained by the fact that this Epistle was not widely circulated outside of its own immediate circle of churches to which it was addressed. We need not lay any stress upon the supposed allusions to 2 Peter found in the Apostolic Fathers, especially in the Epistle of Clement (95 A. D.), as suggested by Kirchhofer, Dietlein, and Keil, for these coincidences are evidently only accidental. They suggest a possible, may be a probable, but by no means a certain reference to the Epistle. It is highly probable that both Justin Martyr (150 A. D.) and Irenæus (180 A. D.) refer to 2 Peter iii. 8, but this cannot be positively established. The fact that

<sup>1</sup> De Wette, Neander, Credner, Reuss, Mayerhoff, Luecke, Ewald, Bleek, Huther, Lechler, Mangold, the Tuebingen School (Baur, Schwegler, Pfeiderer, Holtzmann, Hilgenfeld), Davidson, Edwin Abbott, and others.



2 Peter is not found in the Muratorian Canon (about 170 A. D.) is not conclusive against the Epistle on account of the imperfect condition of this fragment, which is also equally silent concerning 1 Peter, the external evidence of whose canonicity is of the very strongest kind. Nor can we cite the omission of this Epistle in the Peshito, as against it, for the Syrian Bible of the second century omits also four other books (2 and 3 John, Jude, the Apocalypse), which are definitely recognized as a part of the New Testament by the Muratorian Canon.

The first writer to make express mention of 2 Peter is Origen (230 A. D.), but he does this in such a way as to show that the book was well known in his time, but that some doubted its genuineness. Eusebius (*H. E.* VI. 25) quotes him as saying: "Peter has left one Epistle universally acknowledged; let there be a second also, but that is controverted." In some of his writings, known to us, however, only through the Latin translation of Rufinus, Origen, at various times, ascribes this Epistle to Peter. Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, a contemporary of Origen, in his Epistle to Cyprian (*Ep.* 75), speaks of Peter as having "anathematized heretics, and warned us to avoid them," words which can only refer to 2 Peter. We have a right, therefore, to infer that at the beginning of the third century, in Origen's time, the belief of the church was, that Peter wrote it. Eusebius (325 A. D.) is well acquainted with the Epistle, but places it among the *Antilegomena*, "which are, nevertheless, well known and recognized by most." It is evident that Eusebius is but echoing the doubts of his predecessors, as we have every reason to believe that all the books in our present Canon were regarded as canonical by Eusebius himself. Jerome, a half century later, repeats these doubts of his predecessors, but elsewhere accepts the

Epistle as a part of the Canon, without expressing any doubt of its authorship, and suggests that the difference in style between the two Epistles of Peter may be accounted for by the fact of Peter having used different interpreters. After the time of Eusebius the Epistle was received into the Canon, and is attested by all later writers, and is contained in the canon of Laodicea (363 A. D.), and in that of Carthage (397 A. D.). This verdict remained undisturbed until the revival of learning, when Erasmus and Calvin questioned its authenticity, and therefore its canonicity, followed later by such scholars as Grotius, Scaliger, Wetstein, and others, and by so many moderns. The external evidence, therefore, though meagre, is strongly in favor of its canonicity, and the reason why it is so seldom quoted or referred to during the second century lies evidently in its narrow circulation and in its brevity.

2. *The Genuineness of the Epistle.* The *internal evidence* in favor of the view that this Epistle is a genuine writing is very strong.

(1) The Epistle professes to have been written by Peter. He describes himself as an Apostle of Jesus Christ (i. 1), and refers to his former Epistle which he had written to these same readers (iii. 1). He expects soon to die (i. 13, 14), even as Christ had signified to him (i. 14, 15; John xxi. 18, 19); he had seen Christ in person (i. 16), was present at the Transfiguration (i. 17, 18), writes to his readers to remind them of the testimony of the prophets and the teachings of the Apostles (iii. 1, 2), and is familiar with Paul's letters which he had written to these churches (iii. 15, 16). All these personal references are so natural, in such perfect harmony with the character of Peter, that they constitute one of the strongest proofs in favor of the genuineness of this Epistle,

—yet so perverse is the nature of the human mind, when highly critical and bent on attaining a certain conclusion, that critics like Mayerhoff, De Wette, Credner, Schwegler, and even Neander, have laid great stress on this fact as an argument against the genuineness of the Epistle. According to them, this anxiety of the author to make himself known as the Apostle Peter points to the conclusion that Peter himself did not write it, but that the letter is a forgery.

(2) There are some remarkable undesigned coincidences between this Epistle and the speeches of Peter as recorded in the Acts. This argument depends on the special use of certain Greek words, and can only be fully appreciated by the careful Greek student.<sup>1</sup> The peculiar value of this kind of evidence greatly strengthens the argument.

(3) A careful comparison of the contents of this Epistle with that of 1 Peter shows that this Epistle must have been written by the same person who wrote 1 Peter. And when we compare minutely the actual Greek words used this evidence becomes still stronger.<sup>2</sup> In spite of these remarkable points of similarity in style and diction which are so clearly presented by these two Epistles, there are some critics who refuse to accept 2 Peter as a genuine letter of Peter, for the very reason that this second Epistle differs so much in style and diction from

<sup>1</sup> Compare 2 Pet. i. 1 and Acts i. 17; 2 Pet. i. 7 and Acts iii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 17, 21 with Acts ii. 2; 2 Pet. i. 21 with Acts iii. 21; 2 Pet. ii. 1 with Acts iv. 24; 2 Pet. ii. 5 with Acts v. 28; 2 Pet. ii. 8 with Acts ii. 23; 2 Pet. ii. 9 with Acts x. 2, 7; 2 Pet. ii. 9 with Acts iv. 21; 2 Pet. ii. 16, 18 with Acts iv. 18; 2 Pet. iii. 10 with Acts ii. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 13, 15 with Acts i. 18. Only one of the above coincidences occurs elsewhere in the New Testament. Professor Lumby (in *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 226, 227) has developed this most fully.

<sup>2</sup> Lumby, Davidson, and Plumptre have developed this argument very fully.

the first.<sup>1</sup> But no matter how many possible points of difference may be traced, and no matter how subjective these may be, the points of similarity will always be greater by far, and the argument is so much the stronger, because the points of similarity in these Epistles are undesigned. Others lay stress on the difference in sentiment between these two Epistles.<sup>2</sup> But this last need not occasion any difficulty, for the Epistles were written with different purposes.

(4) The whole position assumed by Peter with reference to the errors of the false teachers is exactly the same as set before us in the Epistles of Paul. It must therefore have been written under the same circumstances and at the same time, and not a half a century later when other forms of false teaching had arisen.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stress has been laid upon the following points of dissimilarity : (1) They differ in the titles applied to God the Father and to Christ ; (2) In speaking of Christ's Second Coming different expressions are used ; (3) The Second Epistle differs from the First in fondness for repetitions of words and phrases ; (4) The particles connecting the sentences are different ; (5) In quotations from the Old Testament, the Epistles greatly differ ; (6) The Second Epistle is distinguished by poverty of language ; (7) The style of the First is fresh, lively, periodic ; that of the Second, flat, cold, heavy, etc. What is most surprising, though these critics may agree in denying the genuineness of 2 Peter, they cannot even agree on the very points at issue. Bleek, who lays much stress on this point of difference in *style and diction* says : " The Epistles present the greatest contrast both in thought and language. The main difference is, that the language of the First Epistle is somewhat rough and Hebraizing, while that of the Second is more elegant and better Greek ; the style of the second is more periodic, while in the first the connection of sentences is simple, and even clumsy." Abbott (*Expositor*, 1882), who also denies the Petrine origin of 2 Peter, on the other hand, maintains that not only is there a great difference in style between the two Epistles, but the writer of 2 Peter is " ignorant of the ordinary Greek idiom," the Greek being infinitely inferior to that of 1 Peter.

<sup>2</sup> Even Lechler is carried away by this theory (*Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, vol. 2, p. 159) : " For these reasons we are unable to look upon the Second Epistle as an authoritative source of Petrine doctrine, however grand the individual thoughts."

<sup>3</sup> This argument has been fully elaborated by Lumby.

(5) Note, too, that this Epistle is worthy to be classed among the inspired writings of the New Testament. It is far superior to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.<sup>1</sup> We therefore can rest assured on internal grounds that this Epistle was written by Peter as it professes to be. Among those who accept this Epistle as genuine we have such scholars as Bengel, Guericke, Wiesinger, Thiersch, Dietlein, Luthardt, Schaff, Fronmueller, Hofmann, Keil, Spitta, Alford, Plumptre, Lumby, Plummer, Cook, Eadie, Wordsworth, Sadler, Salmon, and others.

3. *The Persons Addressed.* The letter is written "to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (i. 1). In iii. 1 we have this more definite information: "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you." And there is no reason why we should question this statement that this letter is addressed to the same persons to whom he sent the first. As was the

<sup>1</sup> All kinds of objections, in addition to what have been named, have been raised against the genuineness of this Epistle. (1) Bleek, Eichhorn, Ewald, and Davidson object to the manner in which Peter refers to the Epistles of Paul (2 Peter iii. 16), calling them Scriptures, proving, as they maintain, that this letter was a forgery of a later age. But Peter is not speaking of a complete collection of Paul's letters, for evidently his reference is to the Epistle to the Galatians, to the Colossians, and to the Ephesians, and even if Peter calls them Scriptures, this is nothing less than what Paul contends they are (1 Cor. xiv. 37). (2) Bleek and others object to the expression "holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 18) as if it betrayed a post-Apostolic age. (3) Dr. Abbott (*Expositor*, 1882) undertook to prove that the writer of this Epistle borrowed from the *Antiquities* of Josephus, a work published in 93 A. D., and therefore the author could not be Peter. Even Farrar and Hatch were carried away by the sophistical argument, but Abbott's theory has been utterly demolished by Dr. Warfield (*Southern Presbyterian Review*, April, 1883), and by Dr. Salmon (*Introd.* pp. 497-508), who remarks: "It was not until I carefully examined the matter for myself that I arrived at the conviction that Dr. Abbott's discovery was merely that of a mare's nest." (4) Another objection, strongly insisted on, is the use which the writer of this Epistle makes of the Epistle of Jude. But this we will discuss further on.

first, so this letter is written for both Jews and Gentiles; his readers were also acquainted with the writings of Paul (iii. 15, 16), were familiar with the Old Testament (i. 19-21; ii. 5-7, 15), and were living among the Gentiles (ii. 18). We have a right, therefore, to conclude that this letter was written to the Christian Churches, composed of Christian Jews and Gentiles, scattered through Asia Minor.

4. *Time of Writing.* The Epistle itself gives us only a few hints as to the time it was written. (1) It was written after his first letter (iii. 1); (2) shortly before Peter's death (i. 14, 15); (3) before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A. D.), for there is not the slightest reference to this event. If we accept the view that Peter perished in the great Neronian persecution which broke out in July 64 A. D., this would fix the time of the Epistle as 64 A. D. It is highly probable that it was written within a year of the time of the writing of his first letter.

5. *Place of Writing.* The place of composition has also been a matter of much dispute. But if we assume, as there is every reason to do so, that Peter after writing, his first Epistle about 63 A. D., left Babylon on the Euphrates and made a journey to Rome, there is every probability in its favor that Peter wrote his second letter at Rome, shortly before his death, an opinion accepted by most commentators.

6. *Aim of the Epistle.* The design of the Epistle, according to iii. 17, 18, was twofold: (1) to warn against false teachers, and (2) to exhort his readers to make progress in holiness. The character of these heresies "of perdition" (ii. 1) and of "mockery" (iii. 3) are very graphically described in chapters two and three, and the exhortation to holiness consists in "stirring up their sincere mind by putting them in remembrance" (i. 13; iii. 1) of the words spoken by the holy prophets and by the

Apostles (iii. 2), and takes the special form of urging them (1) to "give more diligence to make their calling and election sure" (i. 10); (2) to "give diligence that they may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight" (iii. 14), and (3) to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (iii. 18).

7. *Original Language of the Epistle.* The language in which this Epistle was written was undoubtedly Greek. Peter knew Greek and his readers were familiar with it. There is no reason whatever for the opinion that the Epistle was originally written in Aramaic,<sup>1</sup> and afterwards translated into Greek.

8. *Contents.* The following brings out very clearly the nature of the contents of this Epistle.

I. 2 Peter i. 1, 2. *Introduction.*

1. Salutation and Prayer of Blessing (1, 2).

II. 2 Peter i. 3-21. *Exhortations to Spiritual Progress confirmed by the Second Coming of Christ.*

2. Exhortation to make progress in the Spiritual Life (3-11).

3. These Exhortations confirmed by the certainty of the Power and of the future Coming of Christ (12-21).

III. 2 Peter ii. 1-22. *False Teachers shall arise.*

4. General Description of False Teachers who shall arise (1-3).

5. God will surely punish these Wicked Persons (4-11).

6. Further Description and Denunciation of these False Teachers (12-22).

IV. 2 Peter iii. 1-18. *The Certainty of Christ's Second Coming and its Lessons.*

<sup>1</sup> Advocated by King, *Did St. Peter Write in Greek?* Cambridge, 1871.

7. The Certainty of Christ's Coming established against Scoffers (1-7).
8. Fuller Refutation of these Scoffers (8-13).
9. Exhortation based on the Nearness of the Final Consummation (14-18).

9. *Relation of 2 Peter to the Epistle of Jude.* The resemblance between 2 Peter ii. 1—iii. 3 and Jude 4-18 is so remarkable that there seems to be some close connection between these two Epistles. Four theories have been proposed to explain this relation.

(1) That both writers drew from some common document, written in some other language than Greek.<sup>1</sup> But there have been very few advocates of this theory, and it is nothing else than an ingenious hypothesis.

(2) That Peter made use of the Epistle of Jude. This is the opinion most generally accepted in recent times.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This view was first advocated by Bishop Sherlock, who thought it highly probable that both Peter and Jude had "translated from some old Hebrew (Aramaic) book, which will account for the difference of language between them, and the great agreement in their images and idea." See Davidson's *Introd. to the New Testament*, vol. 3, pp. 402, 403; also Gloag, *Introd. to the Catholic Epistles*, pp. 242, 243; Sherlock, *Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 129 ff.

<sup>2</sup> It has been adopted by Eichhorn, Hug, Neander, De Wette, Mayerhoff, Credner, Ewald, Guericke, Brueckner, Harless, Reuss, Lechler, Philippi, Hilgenfeld, Bleek, Wiesinger, Weiss, Holtzmann, Mangold, Huther, and others, among the German theologians, and among the English, by Davidson, Alford, Farrar, Plumptre, Eadie, Salmon, and others. The following reasons have been given for this: (1) "The phraseology of Jude is simpler than that of Peter which is more artificial, rhetorical, paraphrastic, and amplified" (DAVIDSON). Both De Wette and Davidson give numerous illustrations to prove this statement, but Brueckner, who also favors the priority of Jude, says that all these examples are far-fetched and overdrawn, and Davidson himself is compelled to say, "In adopting the originality of Jude, it is not necessary to suppose that Peter was a mere copyist. Peter still appears as an original writer. His individuality is not obscured." (2) "Expressions occurring in Jude's Epistle are altered in a very singular manner" (DAVIDSON). These changes, occurring in the Greek for the words *rocks* (Jude 12; 2 Peter ii. 13), *love-feasts* (Jude 12; 2 Pet. ii. 13), *clouds without water* (Jude 12; 2 Pet.



But all the arguments adduced in favor of this view are very unsatisfactory.

(3) A third theory supposes that Jude made use of the Epistle of Peter. This view has been advocated by many scholars, and is still maintained by many recent commentators, although Holtzman calls it "an abandoned hypothesis."<sup>1</sup> But all the arguments presented to prove

ii. 17), are, however, of such an immaterial character that the argument can be used either way, and in either case is of little value. (3) "The passages 2 Pet. ii. 4, 11 become clear only from Jude 6, 9, and are manifestly taken from that passage" (DE WETTE). This is a mere begging of the question, and proves nothing either way, for 2 Pet. ii. 4 is not obscure, and 2 Pet. ii. 11, as well as Jude 9, doubtless refer to a tradition well known to the readers of both Epistles. (4) "The course of thought in Jude is firm and distinct, whilst in 2 Peter it is wavering and unsteady, like that of an imitator" (DE WETTE). But Gloag correctly remarks: "This feature is so entirely subjective that it is differently appreciated by different critics; while some regard it as a mark of originality in Jude, others regard it as a mark of originality in Peter." (5) "The opponents described and denounced in Jude are distinctly portrayed; but in 2 Peter the picture is not clear" (DAVIDSON). But this very argument proves the *priority* of 2 Peter, and not of the Epistle of Jude. During the interval between the composition of 2 Peter and the Epistle of Jude, these heresies had developed themselves more sharply. (6) "It is not so probable that Jude should have extracted a very brief epistle from a larger one, as that the writer of the longer should have used the shorter" (DAVIDSON). But little stress need be laid upon such a subjective opinion.

<sup>1</sup> It has been adopted by Huther, Michaelis, Bengel, Stier, Hengstenberg, Dietlein, Thiersch, Doellinger, Hofmann, Luthardt, Fronmueller, Spitta, Wordsworth, Mansel, Plummer, Lumby, and others. Gloag gives an excellent summary of the reasons assigned for the priority of 2 Peter. (1) "What was future when Peter wrote, was present when Jude wrote" (so Hengstenberg, Fronmueller, Keil, Lumby, Plummer, Wordsworth, Spitta). Compare especially 2 Peter ii. 1-3 with Jude 4; and 2 Pet. iii. 1-4 with Jude 17, 18. This, however, does not prove that Jude made use of 2 Peter, but simply demonstrates that 2 Peter was written some time before, and that there was a possibility of Jude having seen it. (2) In Jude 17, 18 ("Remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts") we have a direct reference to 2 Pet. iii. 3 ("Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts"). It does seem as if there was here a direct quotation from 2 Peter, but it is far

that Jude has made use of 2 Peter are unsatisfactory to the writer. What they do prove is the *priority* of 2 Peter, but nothing more.

(4) The fourth theory is that Peter and Jude wrote independently of each other. This view has been presented under various forms.<sup>1</sup> Olshausen and Augusti would explain the resemblance by the fact that Jude and Peter may have corresponded together, or may have seen each other, and talked the matter over together. When Gloag and Alford raise the objection that those

more natural and probable that Jude here refers to the oral teaching which his hearers had heard from the lips of the Apostles who had visited them in their journeyings ("the words which have been spoken before by the apostles"). (3) "In Jude's Epistle moral corruption appears to be in a more advanced state." (Compare especially 2 Pet. ii. 1-3 with Jude 4, 8, 10, 13, 16.) The evil teaching of which Peter speaks has already in Jude found its natural consequence of evil doing. This indeed proves the priority of 2 Peter, but does not prove that Jude made use of it. (4) Jude elaborates some of the passages of Peter. (Compare 2 Pet. ii. 4 with Jude 6; 2 Pet. ii. 6 with Jude 7; 2 Pet. ii. 11 with Jude 9; 2 Pet. ii. 17 with Jude 12.) (See my *Studies in the Book*, vol. 1, p. 100.) Lumby develops this very fully. But after all this proves nothing, as it is more than counterbalanced by more numerous instances of expansion in parallel passages in 2 Peter.

<sup>1</sup> Although there are many points of resemblance between 2 Pet. ii. 1-iii. 3 and Jude 4-18, there are also remarkable points of difference. A careful comparison of these two passages brings out clearly the following divergences :

2 Peter.	Jude.
ii. 1. There shall be false teachers.	4. Ungodly men are crept in.
ii. 2, 3. Their method of working.	No mention.
No mention.	5. Destruction of Israelites.
ii. 5. Destruction by Flood.	No mention.
ii. 6. No mention of the sin.	7. The sin of Sodom.
ii. 7. The deliverance of Lot.	No mention.
ii. 11. Angels rail not at dignities.	9. Michael rails not at the devil.
No mention.	11. Reference to Cain.
No mention.	11. Reference to Korah.
No mention.	14. Reference to prophecy of Enoch
ii. 20-22. Warning.	No reference.
iii. 3, 4. Scorners deny the Second Advent.	18. No reference to Second Advent.

who hold such a view must be advocates of the mechanical view of inspiration, they simply aim to bring discredit upon this view, without giving any genuine reasons against it, for it has not been proved by those who maintain the priority of Jude or by those who hold to the priority of Peter, that these passages "are so similar that it must follow that the one borrowed from the other, or that both made use of a common document" (GLOAG). In spite of all that has been written on this subject we hold that the difference between the two sections<sup>1</sup> are so great, and of such a peculiar character, that it seems impossible that Jude, at the time of the writing of his Epistle, could have used 2 Peter. Further let it be carefully noted that the resemblance between the two passages, on which so much stress has been laid, consists mainly and largely in the examples and illustrations cited, and not so much in the words used. If we can account for the resemblances which are so evident, in some other way, we need not insist that Jude made a slavish use of Peter, for, as has already been shown, the *priority* of 2 Peter is undoubtedly established. Neither writer copied from the other, nor is it at all likely that Jude had ever seen the Epistle of Peter,<sup>2</sup> but as the errors against which they both wrote were of the same general character, differing only as the bud differs from the flower, or the blossom from the fruit, and as the persons to whom they wrote had received the same kind of instruction, and were familiar with the same traditions which had been delivered to them by the Apostles themselves (1 Cor. xi. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15), especially the

<sup>1</sup> See table given in last note.

<sup>2</sup> Even if he had, this would not in any way interfere either with the authenticity or inspiration of 2 Peter, or of the Epistle of Jude, for there was much in the oral preaching and teaching of the Apostles that was common to all.

prophetical application of the Old Testament history and illustrations to New Testament times, it need not surprise us that in writing against these pernicious heresies and abominations they both should follow the same general line of thought and both "remind the early believers of those Scripture characters whose examples as warnings had been inculcated amongst all the churches as part of the Apostolic teaching" (SADLER).<sup>1</sup>

10. *Select Literature.* In addition to the literature given on the Catholic Epistles in general, pp. vii, viii, and on 1 Peter, p. 101, we would call attention to the following :

Dietlein, *Der Zweite Brief Petri ausgelegt*, Berlin, 1851.

Lillie, *The Second Epistle of Peter, the Epistles of John and Judas, and the Revelation*, New York, 1854.

Spitta, *Der Zweite Brief des Petrus und der Brief des Judas*, Halle, 1885.

The best commentaries on the Greek text of the Second Epistle of Peter are by *Fronmueller*, *Huther*, and *Keil*, and on the English text by *Plumptre*, *Plummer*, and *Lumby* in the Speaker's Commentary.

<sup>1</sup> WORDSWORTH : "It would be erroneous to assert, that St. Jude had merely copied a large portion of St. Peter. It ought rather to be said, that the Holy Spirit often repeated by one Prophet what He had said by another, and that He often repeated by a third Evangelist what He had written before by the other two ; and that he does this for greater confirmation of what He had said ; . . . and so, for like reasons, He repeats by St. Jude, not however without some modifications and additions, what He had already declared by St. Peter. He has thus set His seal on St. Peter's Second Epistle, and has shown that the prophecies, which He Himself there uttered, have been fulfilled."



# THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

## CHAPTER I.

### I. SALUTATION AND PRAYER OF BLESSING.

1, 2 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

1. **Simon Peter.** In the first Epistle we have only the one name *Peter* given. The use of this double name is a proof of the genuineness of the Epistle, especially if we accept the spelling *Symeon*, for a forger would have used only the form *Peter*, as in the first Epistle. Simon or Symeon (Acts xv. 14) was his original Jewish name. Christ sur-named him Peter (Greek) or Cephas (Aramaic), both signifying *Rock*. He probably here combines both names because the churches to which he wrote were mixed churches, the Jews knowing him by his Jewish name, the Gentiles by his Christian name. For the *life* of Peter, see *Introduction to 1 Peter*, pp. 93-97. **A servant.** Greek *bondservant*, one bought with a price (1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23), who belongs to, and must be continually engaged in, the service of his Master Jesus Christ. (See Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1.) **And apostle.** (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 1.) *Servant* expresses the more general relation of dependence in his office, while *Apostle* has reference more to the dignity of his official relation. **To them that have obtained.** The Greek word used for *obtained* implies that the faith which

they had was a gift of grace, given to them without any merit or agency on their part. They were the *elect* sojourners of the Dispersion to whom the first Epistle had been written (2 Peter iii. 1; 1 Peter i. 1). (See *Introduction* to 2 Peter.) **A like precious.** One Greek word, *equally-precious*, in honor, worth, and power. **Faith.** To be taken here both objectively and subjectively, not simply *objectively* as referring to the truths which have been revealed, as held by most modern Commentators (Huther, Brueckner, Besser, Wiesinger, Fronmueller, Alford, and others). We must emphasize here also its *subjective* aspect by which the truth is savingly apprehended. (See i. 5.) So also BENDEL: "Faith has its *preciousness*, as laying hold on *precious promises* (i. 4)." **With us.** *With us* Apostles (so Calvin, Bengel, Brueckner, Fronmueller, etc.), but better *with us* Jewish Christians (so Dietlein, Huther, Besser, Alford, Wordsworth, Wiesinger, etc.). **In the righteousness.** It is best to regard this *righteousness* as the object of our faith. BENDEL rightly remarks: "This *righteousness* of God precedes *faith*; for the faith depends on the *righteousness*." It is the whole divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, especially in its method of originating and preparing a righteousness that might avail for us, through the active and passive obedience of Christ. (So Bengel, Gerhard, Lillie, and others.) **Of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.** Jesus is here spoken of as being both God and Saviour, an express declaration of the Godhead of Christ (so Beza, Gerhard, Dietlein, Schott, Hofmann, Wordsworth, and others). Others (Wiesinger, Brueckner, Fronmueller, Huther, Alford, Lumby, margin of R. V.) incorrectly maintain that two subjects are mentioned, God the Father and the Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. **Grace to you and peace be multiplied.** (See notes on 1 Peter i. 1.) **In the knowledge of God.** "This is life

eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3). Through this knowledge believers escape the defilements of the world (2 Peter ii. 20), and all increase in grace is effected by a deeper knowledge. The Greek word is emphatic (*epignosis*) signifying "a steady growth in knowledge, an advance step by step, not knowledge matured but ever maturing" (LUMBY). Peter uses this word four times in this Epistle (*here*, i. 3, 8; ii. 20). It designates practical, confiding knowledge. **And of Jesus our Lord.** An unusual expression found only here and in Rom. iv. 24. A forger would have written "Lord Jesus," or "Jesus Christ our Lord," or "Christ Jesus our Lord."

## 2. EXHORTATIONS TO MAKE PROGRESS IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

3-II. Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust. Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in *your* virtue knowledge; and in *your* knowledge temperance; and in *your* temperance patience; and in *your* patience godliness; and in *your* godliness love of the brethren; and in *your* love of the brethren love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. This section is noted for its majestic eloquence. Verses 3, 4 serve as an introduction, showing what God does for believers; in verses 5-7 the steps in the ladder



of grace are made clear ; in verses 8, 9 the reasons for the exhortation are given ; in verses 10, 11 the exhortation is resumed and applied to the heart and conscience. **Seeing that.** "Forasmuch as," the Greek particle beginning a new introductory paragraph,—a long sentence in which there is no stop or period, until at the end of verse 7. The punctuation of the A. V., as well as of the Revised Version, which connects verses 3, 4 more closely with what precedes than with what follows, is erroneous, and misses the exact thought of the writer. Such a construction is against the analogy of all the Epistles in the N. T., in which the superscription always closes with a benediction. **His divine power.** Of Jesus our Lord and God. **Hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.** GERLACH : "The Divine Power has given unto us all things necessary for *regeneration* and *holiness*, so that the Christian has no excuse." *Life* which is implanted through regeneration in Baptism indicates the condition in which the believer is, *godliness* refers to his conduct, the evidence that he has life in God. *All things that pertain to both these aspects of the Christian life come to us through the divine power of Jesus.* Peter lays stress upon *godliness*, the word occurring four times in this Epistle (*here*, i. 6, 7 ; iii. 11). **Through the knowledge of him that called us.** The calling is always ascribed to God the Father, as in 1 Pet. i. 15 ; ii. 9 ; 2 Pet. i. 10, and is proof of His love to us. **By his own glory and virtue.** Some ancient authorities read *through glory and virtue*. By *glory* is meant the very essence and nature of the Godhead, by *virtue* is meant the activity of God, the divine power by which the salvation to which we are called is effected. BENDEL : "The Divine glory confers *life* (Rom. vi. 4) ; the Divine *power* confers *godliness*."

4. **Whereby.** That is, through His glory and divine

power. **He hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises.** These promises form the very essence of the Gospel, and do not refer to the O. T. prophecies and promises, nor simply to the N. T. prophecies and promises of the coming of Christ and of the future consummation of the kingdom (2 Pet. iii. 13), but more especially to the promised riches themselves which God offers and bestows upon all who believe in Christ,—redemption and atonement, regeneration, justification, adoption, union with God, and eternal life,—as an earnest of still greater riches to come. **That through these.** *These* does not refer to the “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (verse 3) (so Calvin, De Wette, Brueckner, Hofmann, Lumby, etc.), nor to “glory and virtue,” (verse 3) (Bengel), but to the *promises* just spoken of (Huther, Dietlein, Wiesinger, Alford, etc.). **Ye may become partakers of the divine nature.** For even now in this life we become partakers of this divine nature by regeneration through baptism, and through faith in the Gospel message. Just as Christ had to become a partaker of human nature (Heb. ii. 14), in order that His work might avail for *us* before God, so likewise must we become partakers of His divine nature and become united to Him, if we would be saved by His righteousness, for we must become “partakers of His holiness” (Heb. xii. 10). (See also notes on 1 Pet. i. 23.) This communion with Christ and God begins in our regeneration through Baptism. **Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.** This corruption has its origin in evil lust, and has its sway *in the world*. (See notes on James i. 14, 15 and 1 John ii. 16, 17.) Peter refers not only to the actual sins of men and their personal corruption, but also to *original* sin, the corruption of our nature which has been transmitted from Adam to every human being

by our natural birth, and from which we can only escape by "becoming partakers of the divine nature" by our spiritual birth or regeneration. Moral corruption leads to *corruption* or destruction (2 Pet. ii. 12), and he who would escape this last must flee from the first.

**5. Yea, and for this very cause.** For this very *reason* that Christ has granted us all things pertaining "unto life and godliness" (verse 3), and given us His precious Gospel promises (verse 4). The last verse ought to end with a semicolon, for the Apostle has not yet finished his sentence, which ends only with verse 7. **Adding on your part.** One unique Greek word meaning "to bring in by the side of," more exactly rendered *contributing*. As God does His part in beginning the new life of faith in us, so after our regeneration and justification we are to do our little part (Phil. ii. 12, 13). **All diligence.** A favorite thought with Peter (*here*, i. 10, 15; iii. 14). LUTHER: "Ye have a goodly heritage and a good field, take care that you suffer no thistles and weeds to grow in it." **In your faith.** Faith is the mother of all virtues, the root from which they spring. (See notes on James i. 3; 1 Pet. i. 8.) **Supply.** A compound Greek word used only by Paul (2 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iii. 5; Col. ii. 19) and by Peter (*here* and i. 11), meaning to *furnish*, provide. The Greek word originally meant "to furnish the requisite resources for the outfit, equipment, and training of a chorus." The idea here is that we are to supply or furnish this garland of virtues as our contribution. **Virtue.** BENDEL: "*Virtue* properly signifies an active tone and vigor of mind (1 Pet. i. 13). Faith begets this (2 Cor. iv. 13, 16a)." WORDSWORTH: "Seven Christian graces are here joined together hand in hand. Faith leads the chorus, and love completes it. St. Peter's seven correspond to St. Paul's three (1 Cor. xiii. 13). In each Apostolic group Faith

leads, and love ends." **And in your virtue knowledge.** But *virtue* as the first and best of the seven fruits (Phil. iv. 8) must be joined with *knowledge*. Peter does not here mean a knowledge of God, in which indeed all believers must constantly increase, but a knowledge of a believer's duty in all the relations of life, in the sense of *discretion*, a wise demeanor which knows how to maintain the right moderation in all things. This knowledge preserves us from indiscreet zeal and exaggerations, and "leads and moderates all virtues, so that in the practice of it we err neither by doing too much nor too little, nor stray from the right goal" (CALOVIUS).

6. **And in your knowledge temperance.** The word *temperance* is found only here, and in Acts xxiv. 25 ; Gal. v. 23. The word denotes *self-control*, to bridle one's own desires. **And in your temperance patience.** The active grace of endurance, undergoing trial patiently. (See notes on James i. 3, 4.) **And in your patience godliness.** *Godliness* has reference to our duties to God, in contradistinction to the duties we owe to our fellow-man, or to ourselves (Tit. ii. 12). (See notes on i. 3.) BENGEL: "Note how each step gained in this scale of graces produces and facilitates the next ; and by retracing the scale backwards we may also observe how each successive step tempers, supplements, and perfects its predecessor."

7. **And in your godliness love of the brethren.** This is to be exercised towards those who are our brethren in Christ. (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 22 ; ii. 17 ; iv. 8.) **And in your love of the brethren love.** This is to be manifested towards all men, without distinction (Gal. vi. 10).

8. **For if these things are yours.** The Greek for *are* expresses the idea of inward and permanent possession and property. **And abound.** Better, *multiply* as expressing the progress made by the daily practice of these

virtues. **They make you to be.** In this verse we have the positive reason for the exhortation given in verses 5-7. The cultivation of these virtues leads to a deeper *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Not idle.** That is, active. **Nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** For these Christian virtues will manifest themselves in all manner of good works, and lead to a more *perfect knowledge* of Christ, for there are gradations in this knowledge, and the believer can attain a deeper, more profound, more thorough, and more comprehensive knowledge of the person, works, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (Col. i. 9-11).

9. **For he that lacketh these things.** Here we have the *negative* reason for the exhortation given in verses 5-7. **Is blind.** "Because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John ii. 11), and he knows neither his own heart, nor the will of God, nor the power of Jesus Christ. **Seeing only what is near.** One Greek word, found only here, meaning *closing his eyes*, like one who is short-sighted and from inability to see far enough, is obliged to blink with his eyes, in order to see a distant object. He is blind both as regards the present and the future. **Having forgotten.** A peculiar expression in Greek, literally *having received forgetfulness*. This explains the reason of the blindness and short-sightedness, and implies a voluntary act. **The cleansing from his old sins.** Which took place at the believer's baptism, when all sins were washed away and forgiven (Acts ii. 38; xxii. 16; Eph. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5). BENDEL: "The degrees of relapse are depicted by a felicitous inversion of style. Such a person (1) forgets the cleansing of his *old* sins; (2) he loses sight of *present* privileges (i. 12); (3) he is altogether blind to *future* privileges (i. 11)."

10. **Wherefore.** In verses 8, 9, two reasons are as-

signed why such diligence should be given to increase in Christian grace, and for this very cause Peter resumes the exhortation of verses 5-7. **Brethren.** This marks the earnestness of the Apostle's exhortation, as Peter uses the word only *here*, everywhere else in his Epistles the expression *beloved* occurring (1 Pet. ii. 11; iv. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 1, 8, 14, 17). **Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure.** Peter places our *calling* before our *election*, because we only become aware of our election through our calling. Some (Gerhard, Wiesinger, Fronmueller) would here refer this election to the *eternal choosing* of the believer in Christ, in the sense as used in 1 Pet. i. 1, 2, which is "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (see notes on 1 Pet. i. 1, 2), but that election of God is in itself unchangeable and eternal, and cannot be made more sure or more secure. Both the *calling* and the *election* here referred to take place in time, and our calling on the part of God brings about this *election*, a choosing, a *separating* out from the world, and a translation into the kingdom of God. Paul also uses the word *election* in the same sense in 1 Thess. i. 4, as a result effected by the preaching of the Gospel (1 Thess. i. 5). We can make our calling and our election (separation) *sure* and *secure* by doing the very things which Peter exhorts us to do in verses 5-8, for the believer only knows himself to be among the elect of God so long as "by the power of God he is guarded through faith" (1 Pet. i. 5), and leads a life of true conversion, "in sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Pet. i. 2). **For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble.** James, however, says: "In many things we all stumble" (iii. 2). There is no contradiction here. Peter refers to a stumbling from which there is no rising, in the sense of forfeiting salvation.

**11. For thus.** *If ye do these things. Shall be richly*

**supplied unto you.** If ye *supply* your part (see notes on i. 5), God will *richly supply* His part, not only an abundance of grace, but of glory also. The Greek word for *supply* suggests that **the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ** is given as a gift, and the word *richly* that this entrance will be a glorious and triumphant one, "not as if escaping from shipwreck or from fire, but in a sort of triumph" (BENGEL). It is just the opposite of the *scarcely* of 1 Pet. iv. 18. Both the beginning and the end of our salvation are of God. We have a right to infer from this verse, that according to our different degrees of improvement of God's grace here, so will be our different degrees of participation in His everlasting glory hereafter. (Compare the Parable of the Pounds, Luke xix. 11-27; the Parable of the Talents, Matt. xxv. 14-30; 2 Cor. xix. 6.) Many commentators think that in the word *entrance* is implied "not only the final entrance into the kingdom of glory in Heaven, but also the power and strength to approach nearer and nearer unto Christ in His kingdom of grace in this world" (LUMBY).

### 3. THESE EXHORTATIONS CONFIRMED BY THE CERTAINTY OF THE POWER AND OF THE FUTURE COMING OF CHRIST.

12-21. Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with *you*. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me. Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we *ourselves*

heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy *made* more sure ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts : knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man : but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.

**12. Wherefore.** Because by doing *these things*, spoken of in verses 5-10, lies your only hope of participating in the glories of the eternal kingdom of Christ (i. 11). **I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance.** The explanation of WORDSWORTH is probably the best : "*I shall be about to remind you always of these things*, by means of this Epistle, which will be read in your ears, in your churches, after my decease ; and thus I shall *always* remind you." **Of these things, though you know them.** Of all which had been mentioned in his letter so far. LUTHER : "The Christian ministry has a twofold object (Rom. xii. 7, 8) : (1) teaching, which is laying the foundation of faith and preaching it to those who are ignorant of it ; (2) exhorting, or, as St. Peter says, *reminding*, which is preaching to those who know and have heard the Gospel, admonishing and stirring them up to recollect what they know, and to continue and increase therein." **And are established in the truth.** And are firmly established in the truth of the Gospel **which is present with you**, known and professed by you.

**13. And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle.** *This tabernacle* is a figurative expression for the bodily frame, the same thought, but not exactly the same Greek word as used by Paul in 2 Cor. v. 1-4. Peter here speaks of his body as a building in which his soul dwells, and in the next verse as a garment which is to be put off at his death. BENGE : "This word *tabernacle* implies the immortality of the soul, the briefness of its abode in a



mortal body, and ease of departure in the faith." **To stir you up by putting you in remembrance.** To encourage you. The same phrase occurs in iii. 1.

14. **Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle.** He refers to his death. **Cometh swiftly.** *Is sudden.* The reference is not to the time, but to the manner of his death. Most commentators take *swiftly* as referring to time, meaning *soon*, but incorrectly. The Greek adjective has the same meaning here as in ii. 1. **Even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me.** The aorist tense makes it certain that the writer refers to the *particular* event recorded by St. John (xxi. 18, 19), a prophecy of Peter's *sudden* death on the cross. Verses 13, 14 will be better understood, when we bear in mind that this letter was evidently written at Rome, just before, or at the beginning of, a great persecution, and that Peter had now become old, and knew that he would end his life by a sudden and violent death on the cross, as his Saviour had so clearly foretold.

15. **Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease** (or *departure*). Peter evidently means that by this very Epistle they may be able **to call these things to remembrance.** It is entirely arbitrary to conclude that Peter here promises to write additional letters (Huther), or that he refers to the composition of the Gospel of Mark (Richter, Fronmueller, etc.), or to the appointing of faithful teachers. It is surprising how Roman Catholic commentators twist the meaning of Scripture. They interpret, *I will give diligence also after my decease*, etc., and so pervert the sense of the passage, that they not only deduce from it the doctrine *that the saints intercede for the believers*, but use it in support of their doctrine of the *invocation of saints*.

16. **For we.** Peter uses the plural number, for he was not the only witness of the majesty of Christ. **Did not follow.** A compound verb in Greek found only here, and in ii. 2, 15. Peter makes a twofold denial, (1) that his message is based on fables, and (2) that he spoke at second-hand. **Cunningly devised fables.** Such as the Gentiles believed of their gods, and which are handed down to us in Greek and Roman Mythology. LUMBY: "That legends of this kind, as well as Jewish myths concerning the Messiah, were current, and had produced errors in the faith, we can see from the frequent warnings against them contained in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. i. 4; iv. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 4; Tit. i. 14); where alone except in this verse the word *myths* (fables) is found in the N. T." **When we made known unto you.** Not simply by what he had written in his first Epistle, but rather, which *we*, Peter and the Apostles (including Paul and his companions), made known unto you by the preaching of the Gospel. **The power and coming (*presence*) of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The fulness of the power and might of our glorified Lord will only be fully revealed when at His Second Advent men "shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27). **But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** As manifested in our Saviour's life on earth, especially at His baptism, in His miracles, at His transfiguration, and in His resurrection and ascension to heaven. Peter, however, is thinking specially of the glory in which Christ showed Himself at the time of the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1-8; Mark ix. 2-8; Luke ix. 28-36).

17. **For he received from God the Father honour and glory.** WORDSWORTH: "Jesus Christ received *honor*, when the voice said, 'This is My beloved Son;' and He

received *glory*, when 'His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light' (Matt. xvii. 2), and Peter, James, and John beheld His *glory*, 'glory as of the only begotten from the Father' (John i. 14)."

**When there came such a voice to him.** This voice came out of a bright cloud (Matt. xvii. 5; Mark ix. 7; Luke ix. 35), but Peter leads us to the very presence of God, to the *excellent glory*, of which the cloud was only the symbol. **From the excellent glory.** This is a designation given to God Himself, equivalent to the Hebrew Shechinah, the visible manifestation of God's presence above the mercy-seat. The *margin* of R. V. gives us a more exact translation, "when there was brought such a voice to him by the majestic glory." **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** The minor variations of reading between Peter's statement, and that given by the three Evangelists (Matt. xvii. 5; Mark ix. 7; Luke ix. 35), only demonstrate the independence of their testimony. The Transfiguration made such a wonderful impression upon Peter that he could never forget that scene. Peter's testimony here, to the truth of the Gospel records, has an independent value of its own. Some commentators, incorrectly, would refer this verse to what took place at Christ's baptism, and the next verse to what occurred at the Transfiguration.

**18. And this voice we ourselves heard.** *We* refers especially to the three Apostles, Peter, James, and John. In verse 16, *we* refers to the Apostles in general, including Paul and his companions. **Come (brought) out of heaven.** Emphasizing the fact that Christ received this testimony directly from God the Father. **When we were with him in the holy mount.** The mountain is called *holy* on account of what took place there, and the

history of the Transfiguration was well known wherever the Gospel had been preached.

19-21. In verses 16-18 Peter confirms the certainty of the truths announced by him, by Apostolic testimony, and now in verses 19-21 he corroborates these same truths by Old Testament prophecy,

19. **And we have the word of prophecy.** The reference is to the O. T. prophecies. On the expression "*word of prophecy*" Bengel rightly remarks: "The words of Moses, Isaiah, and all the prophets really constitute only one consistent *word*, for Peter here refers to their whole collective testimony as now disclosed (Acts x. 43)." *Made more sure.* Some interpret, the language of prophecy becomes *more sure* and certain than it was before, from the fact of its fulfilment. (So Œcumenius, Grotius, Bengel, Fronmueller, etc.) Others interpret, the prophetic word is made *more sure* to us *now*, by what we have seen and heard at the Transfiguration. (So DeWette, Brueckner, Dietlein, Schott, Huther, etc.) Some, like Wiesinger, combine this last interpretation with the first. But better than either of these is the interpretation, the word of prophecy is *more sure* in its witness to Christ than even such a vision of glory as the Transfiguration. (So in substance already Augustine, also Bede, John Gerhard, Wordsworth, etc.) GERHARD: "The testimony of the prophets is declared to be *more sure* than that of the Apostles concerning the voice of the Father in heaven and the Transfiguration of Christ. Not more sure *in itself* and absolutely, but in respect of the readers of the Epistle. Among these were converts from Judaism who paid the utmost reverence to the prophetic writings and did not set so high a value on the preaching of the Apostles (Acts xvii. 11)." WORDSWORTH: "St. Peter calls the word of Prophecy *more sure* than the voice

which he heard from heaven; he calls it *more sure*, not *more true*. And what does he mean by calling it *more sure*? He means that it is an evidence by which the hearer is *more assured*. And why? Because it might be alleged by impious men, that the voice and light from heaven were magical illusions; but no such objection can be made against the word of Prophecy. By the voice from heaven the believing are confirmed, and by the word of Prophecy the unbeliever is convinced. Here is a strong evidence of the *genuineness* of the present Epistle. A forger, personating St. Peter, would have magnified the importance of the supernatural visions vouchsafed specially to him whose character he assumed. He would have exalted those revelations above prophecy." **Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.** That is, give attention to the teaching of prophecy with a believing heart, and place more confidence in it. This will lead to a more careful study of the O. T. as well as of the N. T. **As unto a lamp shining in a dark (*squalid*) place.** All the prophecies concerning Christ have not yet been fulfilled, and *prophecy*, especially in its predictions concerning the glory and power of the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world, both in the Old and New Testaments, is as a *lamp shining* in the world not yet illumined by the glorious coming of Christ, and in the hearts of believers, as yet not seeing, but believing and longing for the coming of Christ. The revelation and illumination of God are progressive, and though the light of the O. T. differs from that of the New, as lamplight differs from daylight (1 John ii. 8), nevertheless it is equally true, that we may call the light of the New Testament times a *dark place* in comparison with the light of the New Jerusalem, when "the glory of God shall lighten it, and the lamp thereof be the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 23). To him who looks into

the future the prophetic word will perform a service similar to that of a light in a dark place. **Until the day dawn.** This dawning of the day is the period immediately preceding the Second Advent, when the sign of the Son of man appears (Matt. xxiv. 30), when believers are to look up, and lift their heads, because their redemption draweth nigh (Luke xxi. 28). The nearer we approach the end, the clearer does prophecy become. It must be our guide *until the day dawn*, then the lamp of prophecy will be eclipsed in the light and glory of Christ's presence, "for now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12). **And the day-star arise in your hearts.** *Day-star*, literally, *light-bearer*, the same as *Lucifer*. Christ promises to give to him "that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end" "the Morning Star," i. e. Himself and the brightness of His glory, for He is the Morning Star that heralds the eternal sunrise (Rev. xxii. 16). Those who see the Incarnate *Word* in all His glory will need no longer the prophetic word. In a certain sense, we may say, the day dawns to every *believer* at the time of his death, when his soul enters upon the life to come and meets Christ in heaven.

20. **Knowing this first.** This refers to the following clause, as in iii. 3. First, i. e. first and foremost of all, as in 1 Tim. ii. 1. They are to give special attention to the truths which he now states concerning prophecy. **That no prophecy of Scripture is of private (*special*) interpretation.** This clause has long been famous as the cross of commentators. The reference is to the prophecies contained in the Old Testament, but what is true of them is also true of the prophetic passages in the N. T. The difficulty lies in determining the exact meaning of the phrase *private interpretation*. The Greek word for *interpretation* is found only here, but the corresponding verb

we meet in Mark iv. 34; Acts xix. 39, and all are agreed that the right rendering is *interpretation*, "solution," "explanation." Commentators differ in deciding to what the word "private" (*one's own, its own*) refers. (1) Some (Dietlein, Brueckner, Weiss, Wordsworth, etc.) refer the word *private* to the prophecy itself, translating literally *its own*, i. e. *no prophecy of Scripture interprets itself*. According to this view all prophecy, prior to its fulfilment, is only bewildering. The interpretation belongs to God, and to time. We must receive light from the event or from additional revelations. But surely this cannot be the meaning of Peter, for the whole context is opposed to it, and this view contradicts the testimony of Scripture itself, and many prophecies of Scripture do interpret themselves (1 Tim. iv. 1; Matt. ii. 5, 6; Micah v. 2). (2) Others (Bede, Erasmus, Luther, Gerhard, Steiger, Wiesinger, Hofmann, most Protestant commentators, and Roman Catholics in general) refer the word *private* to the readers of prophecy, interpreting *private* in the sense of *one's own*, no *prophecy* is to be interpreted according to the private judgment of each individual. The Roman Catholic would say, you must have the consent of the Church, and the Protestant, private judgment must be enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and guided by the general teaching of Scripture, or, what is the same, by the analogy of faith. This last Protestant principle of interpretation is indeed a true and safe guide, but the whole context shows that this truth was not in Peter's mind in this passage. (3) Still others (Œcumenius, Knapp, DeWette, etc.) would refer *private* to the prophets themselves, in the sense that the prophets were unable to interpret their own prophecies, making this passage parallel to 1 Pet. i. 10-12, and DeWette suggests that "the author makes this remark in order to excuse the

difficulty of the interpretation, and to take away the occasion for unbelief and scoffing (iii. 3).” But all these views are unsatisfactory. Stress must be laid on the Greek verb translated *is*, which ought to be rendered *cometh into being*, or *cometh*. The word *private* refers to the prophets, but Peter is not speaking about the explanation of prophecy, but of the *origin* of prophecy. The thought is, *no prophecy of Scripture* arises of the prophet's *own interpretation*, it is not the fruit of his own calculation as to what is going to happen. (So already in the main Bengel; also Huther, Fronmueller, Alford, Lumby, Sadler, Lillie, Plumptre, etc.) The text itself and the context favors this meaning, and no valid objection can be raised against it. LUMBY: “Prophecy did not arise from the private interpretation of the prophets. Their words were no mere human exposition, no endeavor on man's part to point to a solution of the difficulties which beset men's minds in this life. The prophets were moved by a Spirit beyond themselves, and spake things deeper than they themselves understood (i. 10).” SADLER: “If prophecy was the production of the mind of any individual man, then the man himself who uttered it would be the proper man to give it its interpretation, but it is not so. The prophets were not masters of themselves in uttering their prophecies. They were borne along by a Higher Power, by the Spirit of God, and so their prophecies are of infinite value.”

21. **For no prophecy ever came** (*was brought*) **by the will of man.** This explains more fully the meaning of the last verse. Prophecy has not its origin in the free will of man. This verse asserts in the fullest sense the inspiration of the prophets. **But men spake from God.** The prophets indeed spoke in the language of men, but the origin of their message was in God. **Being moved**



**by the Holy Ghost.** This clause brings into prominence the passivity of the prophets. They were borne along, like a ship before the wind, and yet in their passivity they were fully conscious. When Peter says they *spake*, he also includes their writings (Acts ii. 31 ; James v. 10). BERNARD : " In the same spirit in which Holy Scripture is written, it must be read and understood." The Holy Ghost is the best interpreter.

## CHAPTER II.

### 4. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FALSE TEACHERS WHO SHALL ARISE.

1-3. But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not.

1. In this chapter we have a description of the false teachers and of the heresies which should arise in the Church, and a warning against them. Peter speaks in short and abrupt sentences, and in words of fervid eloquence denounces the wickedness of those who deny "even the Master that bought them," and predicts their certain destruction. **But there arose false prophets also among the people.** Besides the true prophets "who were moved by the Holy Ghost" (i. 21), there were also false prophets among the people of Israel, like Balaam (Num. xxii.-xxiv.), the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings xviii. 18-22), etc. The language of Deut. xiii. 1-5 already warns against such false prophets. **As among you also there shall be false teachers.** These teachers were false in a double sense, unauthorized, falsely pretending to be teachers, and also teachers of falsehood. **Who. Such as. Shall privily bring in.** One word in Greek, implying *to bring in secretly* and

*alongside* of something else. Only here in N. T., although Paul uses the adjective in Gal. ii. 4 to describe the false brethren *secretly brought in*. Observe the future tense, —a prophecy of what was still *to come*. Note also the contrast between this verb *here* and the expression in Jude 4, “there *are* certain men *crept in privily*” (a different Greek root, but compounded with the same preposition). What Peter describes as future, Jude declares as present. Peter foresaw what Jude saw with his own eyes. This is explicit evidence that Jude wrote *after* Peter. **Destructive heresies**, or *sects of perdition*. Literally *heresies of destruction*, i. e. which lead to destruction. These heresies are destructive to those who bring them in as well as to those who are led astray by them. The Greek word heresy in the N. T. is applied to a religious sect, as the *heresy* or *sect* of the Sadducees (Acts v. 17), of the Pharisees (Acts xv. 5; xxvi. 5), and is applied by the Jews to Christians (Act xxiv. 5, 14; xxviii. 22). The word here means *factions* or *party-divisions* which have their origin in false doctrine, as in 1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20. The adjective *heretical* in Tit. iii. 10 has the same meaning. In later usage a *heresy* is an erroneous belief in regard to some established fundamental religious doctrine, tending to subvert the true faith and to promote schism or separation. **Denying**. This clause characterizes more precisely the nature of the heretical teaching. The manner of their denial is not exactly defined, but Peter evidently refers to their denial of the historical Christ as being both God and Man, to which John refers in his Epistles (1 John ii. 22, 43; iv. 2, 3; 2 John 7). **Even the Master that bought them**. Christ is here called *Master* as in Jude 4. *Bought them* is added by way of emphasis. The price paid was the precious blood of Christ. (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.)

Wordsworth calls attention to the fact that all the Gnostic false teachers of the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic period taught heretical doctrines concerning the divinity, humanity, and atonement of Christ, though not all in the same way. They agreed, however, in this, that they all *denied the Master that bought them*. The followers of Simon Magus, who may be regarded as the precursors of the *Sabellians*, taught that the *Three Persons* of the Trinity were only three revelations of the same divine Person, and thus *they denied* their Lord. The *Docetæ*, by denying the reality of the *human body* of Jesus Christ, and asserting that He died only in appearance, *denied the Master that bought them*. The *Nicolaitans* by their licentious practices, virtually denied the Incarnation of the Son of God. (See Rev. ii, 6, 15.) The *Ebionites*, the predecessors of the *Socinians* and *Unitarians*, denied the *divinity* of Christ; while the *Cerinthians* of Asia *separated Jesus* from *Christ*, asserting that Christ descended from the Father upon the *man Jesus*, at his baptism, in the form of a dove, but that at the *end* of His ministry the Christ flew away from Jesus, and did *not suffer death*, but that only the *man Jesus* suffered on the cross. **Bringing upon themselves swift destruction.** On *swift* compare i. 14. These heresies bring not only destruction to others but also *upon themselves*, and that before they are aware of it, This *destruction* is not a blotting out of existence, but is the opposite of eternal life. On this verse compare Jude 4. On the doctrine of the Annihilation of the Wicked or Conditional Immortality see notes on 1 Pet. iv. 18.

2. **And many shall follow their lascivious doings.** False doctrine and a depraved moral life but too often go hand in hand. This was especially the case in the Early Church. (See ii. 18, 19; Jude 4.) These false teachers

confounded Christian liberty with unbridled license. WORDSWORTH: "Some of the Gnostics affirmed that they were perfect, and that as gold is not injured by mud, so, whatever they themselves do, they are not soiled, although they wallow in the mire of lust, and filth of uncleanness." **By reason of whom.** This refers specially to those who are led astray, but the false teachers are not excluded. **The way of the truth.** That is, the Christian religion. **Shall be evil spoken of.** For enemies of Christianity charge the Christian religion with the sins and deeds of false Christians—the common argument used by the ignorant and thoughtless against the Christian Church.

3. **And in covetousness.** They were living in covetousness, and governed by it. The love of money, which is a root of all evils, is only one form of covetousness, for this latter includes also the lust of power and pleasure. Covetousness is the greatest curse of the ministerial office. "Impurity and covetousness may be said to divide between them nearly the whole domain of human selfishness and vice" (LIGHTFOOT on Col. iii. 5). **Shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.** By deceitful words, alluring and deceiving, they will seek to spread their pernicious doctrines for the sake of gain, aiming to satisfy their covetous desires (ii. 14 ; Jude 16). **Whose sentence now from of old lingereth not.** Sinners themselves slumber, thinking that punishment lingers, but the judgment of these false teachers does not tarry, ever since it has been pronounced *it is not inactive*, it will in due time surely come. **And their destruction slumbereth not,** Divine retribution is here personified. Destruction is not dozing, half-asleep, but is awake, and like a beast ready to devour its prey, ever watchful, waiting for the appointed hour.

### 5. GOD WILL SURELY PUNISH THESE WICKED PERSONS.

4-11. For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* lawless deeds): the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgement; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement, and despise dominion. Daring, selfwilled, they tremble not to rail at dignities: whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgement against them before the Lord.

4. **For if God spared not.** In verses 4-6 we have three examples of divine punishment: (1) the punishment upon the apostate angels; (2) the flood; and (3) the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The conclusion of the thought is found in the last half of verse 9, but the construction is irregular. We might have expected the conclusion, "much less will He spare these false teachers."

**Angels when they sinned.** The evil angels are meant. The nature of their sin is described in Jude 6 as consisting in "not keeping their own principality," and in "leaving their proper habitation." The reference here is to the fall of Satan and his angels at the beginning (John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8), and not to Gen. vi. 2 as many moderns hold. The passage in Gen. vi. 2 refers to the intermarriage of the Sethites (*sons of God*) with the Cainites (*daughters of men*). (Compare Luke xx. 34-36, and see notes on Jude 6, 7.) **But cast them down to hell** (*Tartarus*). The literal translation of this verse reads: *But having cast (them) down into Tartarus into pits of*

*darkness, he delivered (them) over, being reserved unto judgment.* This word *having cast into Tartarus* is found only here in the Bible. *Tartarus* is the specific name here given to that part of Hades where the evil angels and the souls of the wicked are now confined. It is the *fore-hell*, the *abyss* spoken of in Rev. ix. 1, 2, 11; xi. 7, etc., which will finally become the *Gehenna*, the place of final punishment. (See notes on 1 Pet. iii. 19.) **And committed them to pits of darkness.** The critical Greek texts read *seirois* (*pits*) instead of *seirais* (*chains*). This Tartarus is pre-eminently a place of *darkness* far removed from the glory of the light of God's countenance. Bengel and Wordsworth call attention to the fact that this is a *preliminary custody*, for these evil angels may still exert their influence on earth (Luke viii. 31; Eph. ii. 2; Rev. ix. 1-11, etc.), just as one taken captive in war may walk about outside the place of his captivity. **To be reserved unto judgement.** Who are being kept in this *fore-hell* unto the time of the final judgment which is in store for them (Matt. viii. 29; xxv. 41; James ii. 19; Rev. xx. 10).

5. **And spared not the ancient world.** The second example of punishment. By the *ancient world* Peter means those who were living at the time of the flood. **But preserved Noah with seven others.** Literally Noah *the eighth*. This marks the small number of those who were saved contrasted with the large number who perished. Peter accepts the historical truth of the O. T. narrative. **A preacher (herald) of righteousness.** For "Noah was a righteous man, and blameless in his generations," and preached *righteousness* not only by his life, but also in words (Gen. vi. 9-12). That such was also the tradition among the Jews may be seen in Josephus (*Antiq.* I. 3, 1). **When he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.**

For at this time "the earth was corrupt before God ; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth " (Gen. vi. 12). Sin is the cause of punishment. Of mankind all perished, save the *eight* persons saved in the ark. In these examples of punishment Peter evidently is thinking of the words of our Saviour in Luke xvii. 26-29.

6. **And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow.** The third example of punishment. (See Jude 7.) This condemnation was affected by the destruction of these cities. (See Gen. xix. 24-28.) **Having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly.** HOFMANN: "God has made them, as the perfect tense shows, a lasting type of those who ever afterwards should live a godless life." The prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Zephaniah) as well as our Lord Himself (Luke xvii. 26-29) refer to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning to the ungodly.

7. **And delivered righteous Lot.** The reference to this deliverance prepares the way for the double inference of verse 9. Lot, like Noah, had also led a righteous life, and had been a preacher of righteousness (Gen. xix. 7, 14). **Sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked.** The Greek word for *wicked* is found only here and in iii. 17. It denotes those who break through all restraints of law to gratify their lust, sinning against nature itself.

8. **For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed (*tormented*) his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds.** An explanation defining more fully the cause of Lot's distress. It was the wickedness surrounding him. With great pain he saw their abominable deeds and heard their foul and ungodly language. LUMBY: "When we notice the



words 'dwelling among them,' and remember that it was his own choice (Gen. xiii. 11) that selected the plain of the Jordan and the neighborhood of Sodom for his home, we can understand how such self-tormenting might be natural."

9. This verse constitutes the irregular conclusion of the clauses beginning with verse 4. **The Lord knoweth.** God's knowledge implies also His power. **How to deliver the godly.** Such as Noah and Lot. **Out of temptation.** Trials, persecutions, and the like, by providing the way of escape (1 Cor. x. 13). (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 6.) **And to keep the unrighteous.** Such as the fallen angels, the ungodly ancient world, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the like. **Under punishment.** The present participle (Greek) indicates that their punishment has already begun, and in this condition they are kept unto the day of judgment, when punishment shall be more fully meted out to them according to the righteous judgment of God. **Unto the day of judgement.** (See notes on ii. 4.)

10. **But chiefly them.** Closely connected with the last half of verse 9. Above all others shall God keep under punishment these false teachers (ii. 1-3), whose abominable sins are now more fully described. **That walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement.** In Jude (verses 7, 8) we have a fuller statement of the unspeakable sins of which these ungodly men were guilty. The reference evidently is to the terrible sins of Sodom (Gen. xix. 5; Lev. xviii. 22-24), and to the darkest forms of iniquity common throughout the Roman Empire (Rom. i. 24-28). **And despise dominion.** FROMMUELLER: "The first mark of these false teachers was the denial of Christ (ii. 1); the second, covetousness (ii. 3); the third, unbridled sensuality (ii. 10); the last, arrogant despising of

lordship." They despised not only *the dominion* of "the Master that bought them" (ii. 1); but every form of authority, human and divine, which would in any way exercise restraint. We need not here interpret *dominion* as referring to *angelic powers*, as in Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16.

**Daring.** In Peter's prophetic vision these false teachers, who were afterwards to arise, appear as already present. *Audacious and insolent*, knowing the penalties of sin, they nevertheless defy them. **Selfwilled, they tremble not to rail at dignities** (*glories*). It is best to regard these *dignities* as angelic powers, the good angels who surround the throne of God, and who are God's agents in the government of the world. Lumby, who, however, refers *dignities* to both the *good* and *evil* angels, states the thought very clearly: "Peter means that the daring and self-willed sinners of whom he speaks, though knowing the might of the spiritual powers, yet in contempt of them, whether they be good or bad, proceed on their evil courses, setting at naught the danger into which evil powers may lead them, and disregarding the warnings which may be ministered to them by the good. And though daring this they tremble not."

**11. Whereas angels, though greater in might and power.** In this difficult and much controverted passage, the context seems to suggest that these angels are evil angels, who, although they are superior in strength and power to these *daring* and *self-willed* false teachers, still are not so presumptuous and bold, for these **bring not a railing judgement against them before the Lord**. They realize that their punishment is just, and they bring not a judgment of railing against the good angels, who were the powers which God used in committing the Apostate angels "to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (ii. 4).

## 6. FURTHER DESCRIPTION AND DENUNCIATION OF THESE FALSE TEACHERS.

12-22. But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing; *men* that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, spots and blemishes, revelling in their love-feasts while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing; forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. For, uttering great swelling *words* of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turneth to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire.

12. **But these.** The false teachers spoken of in verse 10, in contrast to the evil angels just mentioned. **As creatures without reason, born mere (*natural*) animals to be taken and destroyed (*or to take and destroy*).** They are like irrational animals that know nothing of a higher world, which have been created to be caught by men and to be killed for their use. To such a depth of infamy and impunity had these men fallen. **Railing in matters whereof they are ignorant.** Referring to the railing spoken of in verse 10. **Shall in their destroying (*corruption*) surely be destroyed.** This does not mean that they shall die as the irrational brutes, or that they shall be

annihilated (see notes on 1 Pet. iv. 18), but that they shall continue in their corruption, advancing in it, until they reach its final issue—eternal perdition (Gal. vi. 8).

**13. Suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing.** Some ancient authorities as well as critical editors read *about to receive* the hire (*wages*) of wrong-doing (*unrighteousness*). **Men that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time.** Whose whole life consists only in luxurious living, "whose god is the belly" (Phil. iii. 19). **Spots and blemishes.** Moral stains causing and bringing disgrace. **Revelling in their love-feasts while they feast with you.** Many ancient authorities read *revelling in their deceivings*. It was only for the sake of carnal indulgence that they took part in the love-feasts of the Church. The *Agapæ* or *love-feasts* were at first connected in time and place with the Lord's Supper, but afterwards separated, and survived for three hundred years or more, till the disorders connected with them led to their discontinuance. If we accept the reading *deceivings* or *deceits* we may with Huther explain the passage: "They revelled in their deceits, by enjoying themselves at the feasts of those among whom they had obtained an entrance by deceit."

**14. Having eyes full of adultery (an adulteress).** The lust after the adulteress is depicted in their eyes. **And that cannot cease from sin.** Eyes reflecting the restless desire after sensual sins. **Enticing unstedfast souls.** *Luring*, as fish are lured *by a bait*, such souls as had not yet been established and grounded in the faith and in love to Christ. **Having a heart exercised in covetousness.** For their hearts had continual practice in this vice. In verses 13 and 14 three kinds of *wrong-doing* are spoken of—(1) luxurious living; (2) licentiousness; (3) covetousness,—and all these feed one another. **Children of curs-**

**ing.** These false teachers are such as have incurred and have in store for them the curse of God, children of perdition (2 Thess. ii. 3).

**15. Forsaking the right way.** "The way of the truth" (ii. 2), "the way of God" (Acts xviii. 26; xiii. 10). **They went astray.** They became backsliders, waxing worse and worse (2 Tim. iii. 13). **Having followed the way of Balaam.** His conduct and manner of life. His history is given in Num. xxii. 1—xxiv. 25; xxxi. 8—16; Josh. xiii. 22. **The son of Beor.** Many ancient authorities read *Bösor*. This last reading probably arises from the pronunciation of the guttural letter found in the Hebrew word *Beor*. **Who loved the hire of wrongdoing.** Though the covetousness of Balaam is not explicitly referred to, the O. T. narrative implies that he was anxious to please Balak, for the sake of reward (Num. xxii. 19). Peter gives us a clue to Balaam's true character. (See also Num. xxxi. 8, 16.)

**16. But he was rebuked for his own transgression.** His transgression was, that he was willing for the sake of reward to curse Israel. The manner of this rebuke is now stated. **A dumb ass.** A beast of burden, an ass, which was not endowed with human speech. **Spake with man's voice.** Stress is laid upon the miraculous nature of the event. **And stayed the madness of the prophet.** For it was madness to fight against God. LUTHER: "It is an unequal fight, if old pots will fight with rocks; for let it happen as it will, the pots will come to grief." Balaam is a strange character. Some, like Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and others, have regarded him as a thoroughly godless and false prophet,—a prophet of the devil; while Tertullian, Jerome, and others have maintained that he was a true prophet, who fell through covetousness and ambition. The true view

lies between the two extreme views. He was a heathen soothsayer, and yet God used him and made him the bearer of His revelations. We have here Apostolic testimony to the *truth* of the history of Balaam and his ass. We are not to regard this as a legend, nor as a vision on the part of Balaam in an ecstatic state, nor as a mere imagination of his own mind, but as an external, objective occurrence. WORDSWORTH: "The ass saw the angel which the prophet could not see; and showed more of reason and knowledge than her master who rode upon her, and who, though endued with many spiritual gifts, was then blinded by disobedience. In like manner, the most unlearned person, who receives the history of Balaam as true,—a history guaranteed by the testimony of the inspired Apostle Peter, and by that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who received all the O. T. as true,—is really a far more intelligent and clear-sighted person than the Infidel Philosopher and Biblical Expositor who reject that history as false. The believer *sees the angel*; the unbelieving Philosopher and Expositor are blind."

17. **These are springs without water.** We have now a description of these false teachers with reference to the influence which they exert. Their teaching is empty and deceptive. They are like dried-up wells in the desert, which mock the thirsty traveller. **And mists driven by a storm.** Referring to the inconsistency and fluctuating inability of their teaching. **For whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved.** To be visited upon them at the day of judgment when punishment will surely overtake these ungodly men (2 Peter iii. 7).

18. **For.** The reason is now given for the statement made in verse 17. **Uttering great swelling words of vanity.** Hollow, vain phrases, "proud words with nothing to back them" (LUTHER). **They entice in the lusts**

**of the flesh, by lasciviousness.** In fleshly lusts they lay their enticing baits, and the instrument or bait which they use is *licentiousness*. This is commonly, but wrongly, interpreted, "through the lusts of the flesh, through lasciviousness," as if the last word was in apposition to *lusts*. **Those who are just escaping from them that live in error.** The persons whom these false teachers are seducing are those who have but lately been converted,—*just escaping* from the heathen who still *live in error*,—and who are not yet fully established in the faith.

19. **Promising them liberty.** And thus causing these new converts to become backsliders, and making them the slaves of brutish lusts. **While they themselves are bondservants of corruption.** Note the sharp antithesis. These false teachers promise liberty, while they themselves are *slaves* of moral *corruption* and sin, a corruption ending in eternal perdition. **For of whom (what) a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.** Literally, "For to whom any one succumbs, to this one he has been made a slave." We are reminded of our Saviour's saying, "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (John viii. 34). (See also Rom. vi. 16.)

20. **For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world.** Peter is speaking of the false teachers, not of those who are being led away by them, but the statement is true of all backsliders. These *miasmata* are the corruption, the pollutions which were in the heathen world through lust (i. 4). **Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** Peter implies that these false teachers had once possessed a true knowledge (*epignosis*) of Christ. **They are again entangled therein.** In these defilements and pollutions of the world. The word here used is very emphatic. It describes those

who become so *entangled* with snares and ropes that there is no escape. **And overcome.** By Satan and the bondage of sin, from which they had once been delivered. **The last state has become worse with them than the first.** The condition into which they have fallen since they have backslidden is worse than that in which they were before their conversion, for there is less hope of their repentance and conversion, they having fallen under a greater bondage and slavery to sin and lust than ever before. The same statement is made by Christ (Matt. xii. 45 ; Luke xi. 26). Humanly speaking, there is no redemption for such, for they are committing the sin against the Holy Ghost (Heb. x. 26, 27). This passage clearly teaches that a falling away from the state of grace is possible, a doctrine denied by strict Calvinists.

21. **For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.** This is an explanation and confirmation of the preceding verse. By *the way of righteousness* is meant the doctrine of the Gospel, and by *the holy commandment* the moral law of the Gospel which requires holiness of life and obedience to Christ. "The word *delivered* implies, as in Jude 3, the oral teaching of the elements of Christian faith and life which was imparted to all converts prior to their baptism" (PLUMPTRE). The greater the knowledge, the greater the responsibility, and the greater the condemnation for the misuse of what men know.

22. **It has happened unto them according to the true proverb.** The two proverbs which are here quoted are taken from the two animals which are held in greatest contempt in the East. Peter uses the singular, because the proverbs have one and the same meaning, and he



calls it *true*, because in the case of these false teachers it has also proved true. **The dog turning to his own vomit again.** (Compare Prov. xxvi. 21.) **And the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire.** This proverb seems to have been taken from popular tradition. These false teachers, and all others like them, who after baptism return to the impurities they once had renounced, are, in the Apostle's eyes, no better than dogs or swine. Peter may have had in mind the saying of Christ recorded in Matt. vii. 6.

## CHAPTER III.

### 7. THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S COMING ESTABLISHED AGAINST SCOFFERS.

1-7. This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you ; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance ; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles : knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God ; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished : but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.

1. **This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you.** Peter had written his first Epistle but a short time before. **And in both of them.** *In which*, in these two letters of mine. **I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance.** The reason why he wrote these two letters is here stated. We have here a resumption of the thought expressed in i. 3. By mind (*dianoia*) the Apostle means the faculty which weighs and estimates and understands. In the case of the unregenerate, who walk in the vanity of their mind (*nous*), their *understanding* (*dianoia*) is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart (Eph. iv. 17, 18) ; but these to whom writes Peter had a *pure* and

*sincere* mind, believing and loving the truth, and growing holy in and by the truth.

2. **That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets.** We have already seen in i. 19 how great a stress Peter lays upon *the word of prophecy*. The reference is especially to the prophecies which relate to the Second Coming of Christ. **And the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles.** This is the meaning of the Greek, the construction being somewhat peculiar, owing to the number of genitives. The commandment is at once a commandment of Christ and of the Apostles, for the teaching or commandment of Christ (ii. 21) came to these Christians *through* the Apostles. Peter here includes himself among the Apostles, as well as Paul and his companions, and James, for the letters of both Paul and James were well known to these persons to whom Peter was writing.

3. **Knowing this first.** (See notes on i. 20.) **That in the last days** (*of the days*). In the period immediately preceding the Second Coming of our Lord. **Mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts.** These differ from the false teachers described in the second chapter, but these two classes have much in common. Paul also gives warning of the appearance of such men (Acts xx. 29, 30; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 2 Tim. iii. 1-5). Those who follow after their own lusts cannot discern the signs of Christ's coming or of His kingdom. Luther calls attention to the fact that the world is full of such Epicureans, Antinomians, and Sadducees, who believe neither one thing nor the other, who live as they think best, walking after their own lusts.

4. **And saying, Where is the promise of his coming** (*presence*)? Peter in this verse quotes the language of the scoffers. They denied the visible coming of Christ

to judgment, and the final consummation of all things, as promised by Christ (Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 37, etc.), and His Apostles (2 Thess. i. 7-10; 2 Peter iii. 10-12). **For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep.** The fathers here spoken of are the first generation of Christian believers. Although these had expected the *Parousia*, as immediately connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, they had died without seeing it, and now Peter in the Spirit foresees that these scoffers mockingly deny the Second Coming of the Lord altogether. Stephen was the first of "the fathers" who "fell asleep," and after him James the brother of John (Acts xii. 2), and many more would be regarded as "fathers" whose names were well known to the churches. **All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.** That is, not only do all things remain as they are since the fathers died, but there has been no change since the beginning of the creation. These scoffers mean to say, not only has the prediction of Christ's coming not yet been fulfilled as you have taught and looked for, but why should there be any such fulfilment. We have such scoffers in the present day, and there are many who seek to explain away all references to the visible Second Coming of Christ by speaking of a spiritual coming. On the delay of Christ's Coming see the notes on James v. 7, 8; 2 Peter i. 16. It is very likely that these scoffers denied all interference of God in the affairs of men, holding to the same error as our modern Deists, who maintain that God indeed made the world, but after He had created it, set it a-going, and then left it alone. Deism separates God from the world, denies a particular providence, a supernatural revelation, miracles, prophecy, redemption, and the work of the Spirit.

5. **For this they wilfully forget.** That is, they are

wilfully ignorant. Peter now refutes the assertion of the scoffers that "all things continue as they were from the beginning" by bringing forward the fact of the flood. **That there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst (*through*) water.** Peter here refers to the account of creation given in Gen. i. 1-10. A twofold significance is attributed to water: (1) the world originated *out of water*, out of the dark deep upon which the Spirit of God moved, to which original state of matter immediately after its creation the Hebrew writer gives the name of *water* (Gen. i. 2), for the word *mayim* does not necessarily mean *waters*, but applies just as well to the gaseous condition in which primeval created matter largely existed; (2) the world originated *through* the agency of *water* (Gen. i. 7-9). HUTHER: "This is in harmony with the Mosaic account of the creation, where the original substance is distinctly spoken of as *water*, and in the formation of the earth water is mentioned as the instrumental element." **By the word of God.** The active cause of the creation of the world was the Word of God. This means that the world originated through a *conscious, free act* of God. This excludes every theory of the origin of the world by *emanation*, or the assumption of an eternal elementary *matter* independent of God.

6. *By which means. Through which* (plural), though we have no plural antecedent. Three interpretations have been given. (1) *Which* is made to refer to *heavens* and *earth*, as if these became the instruments of destruction to the then existing world of human beings and animals, being the reservoirs of the *water* by which the world was drowned at the flood (so Œcumenius, Beza, Bengel, Fronmueller, Hofmann, Wordsworth). This is indeed true but it is doubtful whether Peter thought of

this. (2) *Through which*, that is, *the water and the word of God* spoken of in the preceding verse (so Gerhard, Besser, Wiesinger, Brueckner, and others). This is also true, and seems more in accordance with the context than the first interpretation. (3) *Through which*, that is, the waters twice mentioned in the previous verse. The waters above the firmament and those under it were alike employed to bring about the deluge (Gen. vii. 11). So Calvin, Huther, Plumptre, Lumby, Sadler, and others. This seems to be the meaning most suitable to the context. **The world that then was.** The world of living creatures, especially of man. **Being overflowed with water.** This states more exactly in what way the world perished through water. **Perished.** The whole of the human race perished save those in the ark (Gen. vii. 23). Against these scoffers who held that the world always has continued in the same condition, and shall always so continue, Peter shows that *it once has been destroyed* at the time of the flood, and that this is not all. There shall come still another destruction, but this shall be of another kind.

7. **But the heavens that now are, and the earth.** Our present condition of the world as it is now constituted. **By the same word.** As the heavens and earth were created by the Word of God (iii. 5) and the flood came by the Word of God, so *by the same Word have been stored up for fire* (*stored with fire*) these same heavens and earth as they now are. Commentators are about equally divided whether we should join fire with *stored up* as in the Revised text, or with *being reserved*. There is scarcely any difference in thought. WORDSWORTH: "They are indeed *treasured up*; but not as these false teachers say, *for eternity*, but *for fire*, as the old world was treasured up for *water*; and they are *treasured up*

*by His Word*, that is, as long as He wills it, and no longer. The word *fire* is emphatic, and therefore is placed last in the clause. This reservation of the world for *fire* has been revealed by the old Prophets (Isa. lxvi. 15, 16; Dan. vii. 9-11; Mal. iv. 1)." The same thought is also presented in the N. T. (Matt. iii. 12; xxv. 41; 2 Thess. i. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10). **Being reserved against the day of judgement.** Which immediately follows the resurrection of the wicked and is accompanied by the passing away of the heavens and the burning up of the earth and the works that are therein, preparatory to the final consummation of all things (iii. 10, 13). **And destruction of ungodly men.** Not the annihilation of the wicked, but perdition and eternal death shall be their lot. (See notes on 1 Pet. iv. 18.)

#### 8. FURTHER REFUTATION OF THESE SCOFFERS.

8-13. But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in *all* holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

8. **But, forget not.** Peter now admonishes believers not to forget the teaching of Scripture as these mockers do, and shows that the protracted delay of Christ's Coming is no proof that it will not take place. **This one thing, beloved.** God's way of reckoning time, the standard of which is eternity and not a human measure of time,

explains this seeming delay. **That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** The reference is to Ps. xc. 4. BENDEL: "With God there is no such thing as long delay. The *age-dial* of God differs from the *hour-dial* of man. Its index shows all hours at once in the busiest action and most deep repose. With Him times pass with neither less nor greater speed than suits His will and purpose. He has no need to hasten or delay the end of things. How can we comprehend this? Were it in our power, neither Moses nor Peter need have added the words *with the Lord.*"

9. **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.** The first answer to these mockers was drawn from the Mosaic account of creation (iii. 5, 6); the second answer (iii. 8) lays stress on the fact that what seems delay to us is none to God; and the third answer explains that this seeming delay was not owing to *tardiness* but to the *longsuffering* of God the Father. **As some count slackness.** The reference is to believers weak in the faith, who thought that God was tardy after the manner of men or from neglect. **But is longsuffering to you-ward.** That is to the readers of this Epistle, including however all men in general. The reason, why Christ has not come before this to judge the world lies in the longsuffering love of God. For God is waiting until the number of those who shall be saved is filled up, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. xi. 25). **Not wishing that any should perish.** For God does not wish that a single soul should enter upon a state of eternal death, just the opposite of the state of salvation which has been prepared for all men. **But that all should come to repentance.** For "God willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.



ii. 4). (Compare Ezek. xviii. 23 ; xxxiii. 11 ; Matthew xxiii. 37.) We are not to restrict this passage to the elect.

10. **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief.** The order of the words in Greek emphasizes *the certainty* of the coming of the day of judgment, and its unexpected suddenness is expressed by *as a thief* (Matt. xxiv. 43, 44 ; Luke xii. 39, 40 ; 1 Thess. v. 2 ; Rev. xvi. 15). Peter does not describe the different stages and events of the Second Coming of Christ minutely. With him six great events are closely connected : (1) the Second Coming of Christ ; (2) the resurrection of believers (1 Pet. iv. 13 ; v. 1, 4) ; (3) the resurrection of the wicked (2 Pet. ii. 9 ; iii. 7) ; (4) the day of judgment (2 Pet. ii. 4, 9 ; iii. 7) ; (5) the end of the world (1 Pet. iii. 10, 12) ; (6) the manifestation of a new heavens and a new earth. Peter, in his prophetic vision, sees the whole history of the consummation of all things in one glance as taking place in one Great Day of the Lord. The coming of the Day of God and the end of the world are to him one event. **In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise.** The manner in which this takes place is defined more closely in verse 12, "*the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved.*" Some understand by this *great noise* the crackling noise of the flames which shall consume the heavens, others of the crash with which they shall fall, and still others of the *rushing* swiftness with which they shall pass away (Rev. xx. 11). **And the elements (*heavenly bodies*) shall be dissolved with fervent heat.** It is difficult to decide whether by these *elements* are meant the heavenly bodies or the *constituent* elements of the universe. It is best to refer this dissolution to the whole universe (Matt. xxiv. 29). As water was the agency of the destruction of the world at the time of the

flood, so fire will be the agency at the last day. **And the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.** If we accept the reading *shall be found or discovered* instead of *shall be burned up*, this clause must be pointed as an interrogative sentence: *Shall the earth and the works that are therein be found?* The general thought would be the same. These *works* refer to all which man has made. The destruction here spoken of does not involve actual annihilation. It involves rather a change of the forms and qualities of the earth, and not the blotting out of the substance. It is a transmutation, a transformation, the regeneration of which Christ speaks in Matt. xix. 28. Burning is not annihilation, but involves only a change of form, and the melting of the elements leaves their substance untouched (iii. 12). The fire here spoken of, as well as in verse 12, is to be thought of as a fire of purification, and not one of annihilation. There is no foundation for the theory of the annihilation of this world in the analogies drawn from nature, in the deductions of science, or in the teaching of Scripture.

**11. Seeing that these things.** The heavens and the elements of the universe, including the earth and the works that are therein. **Are thus all to be dissolved.** *Are being dissolved.* The present participle expresses the certainty of the event, which is still future. **What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness.** Seeing that the world shall pass away, and that all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, let us live in the true fear of God, serve Him in all forms of holy behavior and piety, and carefully guard against sin (AUGUSTINE).

**12. Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming (presence) of the day of God.** This day of God is the day

of judgment, the day of the Lord spoken of in verse 10. Believers are to *look for* and *hasten* (which is the literal translation of the Greek word paraphrased *earnestly desiring*) the coming of Christ, by leading holy lives and offering prayers for Christ's speedy coming. BENDEL: "A person eagerly desirous of anything will press forward its accomplishment by all means in his power." Believers especially *hasten* the coming of Christ by helping to fulfil those conditions, without which it cannot come—the day being not inexorably fixed by God,—but one which depends largely on the activity of the Church, which is free to help in bringing about those conditions by faith and prayer, and in making up the number of those who shall be saved, in order that the fulness of the Gentiles may come in (Rom. xi. 25). **By reason of which.** The sense remains substantially the same whether we refer *which* to the coming, or to the day of God. This coming of Christ which ushers in the day of God is the occasion which brings about the dissolution of the heavens and the earth. **The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.** There is nothing incredible in this, that fire is the element by which the world is to be purified. The sciences of geology and astronomy, of chemistry and physics, in modern times, contribute to natural evidence of the probability of a burning up of the world. What these sciences affirm as probable, the Bible teaches as most true. This destruction here spoken of does not involve actual annihilation. (See notes on iii. 10.)

13. **But, according to his promise.** The reference is to the promise of God given by Isaiah (lxv. 17; lxvi. 22). **We look for new heavens and a new earth.** For this is the certain hope of believers, "for the first heaven and the first earth" shall pass away (Rev. xxi. 1). **Wherein**

**dwellleth righteousness.** This reproduces the thought of Isaiah lxxv. 25, and is in harmony with the statement of Paul that "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Rom. viii. 21), and with it agrees John's account of the new Jerusalem, that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean" (Rev. xxi. 27). This is the final consummation. After the final resurrection and the judgment, when the heavens shall have passed away with a great noise and the earth burned up (iii. 10, 12) then shall appear the new heavens and the new earth (xxi. 1). This new earth, after the final judgment, will then form the future habitation of the risen and glorified saints, and God shall dwell with them (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

#### 9. EXHORTATIONS BASED ON THE NEARNESS OF THE FINAL CONSUMMATION.

14-18. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing *these things* beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

14. **Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things.** This exhortation is based on their expectation of the new heavens and new earth. **Give diligence that ye may be found.** Both now in the present time of expectation, but especially at the time of judgment (1 Pet. i. 7). **In peace.** Not only peace of conscience, but in peace with God and with man. Peace is the sphere in

which the Christian must live and move. **Without spot and blameless in his sight.** Before God, in His judgment. Christ was without spot and without blemish (1 Pet. i. 19), and God has chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love (Eph. i. 4). If we permit the God of peace to sanctify us wholly, in spirit, soul, and body, then we shall be made like unto Christ in our lives, and be preserved entire, without blame at His coming (1 Thess. v. 23). Peter may have been thinking of the parable of the Wedding Garment (Matt. xxii. 1-14).

**15. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.** This *longsuffering* consists in this, that God in His mercy delays the day of Judgment. (See notes on iii. 9.) It is God's will that men should use this time of grace so that they may obtain *salvation*. **Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you.** This reference to Paul emphasizes the exhortations given in verses 14 and 15, and proves how intimately Peter and Paul were united in their official work, and that the incident related in Gal. ii. 11-14 did not in any way break their bond of love and spiritual fellowship. This *wisdom* of which Peter speaks as having been given to Paul refers especially to his aptitude in teaching and ministering to the spiritual and intellectual needs of his hearers and readers. The letters here referred to, which Paul wrote to these persons to which also this letter was addressed, are evidently the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, because all these are addressed to churches in Asia Minor.

**16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things.** Peter here distinguishes between the letters which Paul wrote to the churches in Asia Minor, and his

other letters, and he asserts that in these latter, Paul also speaks of the coming of Christ, of the day of judgment, and the things which are connected with these events, and exhorts them to steadfastness in faith and zeal in good works, based upon these great truths. **Wherein are some things hard to be understood.** In *which epistles* are certain expressions and statements *hard to understand*. **Which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest.** We can only conjecture what these utterances of Paul were, which were perverted by the ignorant and unsteadfast. Commentators refer to the Pauline doctrine of freedom (Gal. v. 1; Rom. v. 20), which Paul himself says was perverted by some (Rom. iii. 8), to a false doctrine of the resurrection (2 Tim. ii. 18), possibly based upon a perversion of Eph. ii. 5, 6; Col. ii. 12; or even of 1 Cor. xv. 12-58. Gerhard includes among these perversions false views of the *Parousia*, of justification by faith, of Christian liberty, of the coming of Antichrist, and especially the justification and excuses of lawless extravagancies. **As they do also the other Scriptures.** Especially the prophetic writings of the O. T., but we need not exclude the Epistle of James, nor any writings of the New Testament which were current at the time of the composition of this Epistle. **Unto their own destruction.** (See notes on ii. 1, 3.) This wresting of Scripture leads to perdition and everlasting punishment, inasmuch as by these perversions of Scripture they harden themselves in their fleshly lusts, which have their fruit in eternal death.

17. **Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand.** For Peter has given them plain warning against these false teachers and these mockers. **Beware lest.** *Be on your guard.* Special emphasis is laid upon this *guarding*. **Being carried away with the error of the wicked.** These wicked ones are the false teachers of libertinism

and the mockers spoken of in these last two chapters. **Ye fall from your own steadfastness.** In doctrine and in life, for the believer must implicitly follow the teaching of Scripture in this respect, and take a firm stand, immovable as the Rock, upon which we are built, even Christ Himself. God alone can give us the faith to remain steadfast, but we are to make diligent use of the means which God provides, by watching, praying, and attending to the Word of God.

**18. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** The best preservation against error and the best means of promoting steadfastness are the continual practice of faith, and a continual growth in grace and the knowledge Christ. Peter here, as in i. 2, lays stress on an ever increasing knowledge of the person, and the offices, and the benefits of Christ. A true knowledge of Christ is the cause of all Christian activity. **To him be the glory both now and for ever** (*unto the day of eternity*). **Amen.** A doxology to Jesus Christ as God. (See notes on 1 Pet. iv. 11.) This *day of eternity* is the day on which eternity, as contrasted with time, begins, which, however, at the same time, is eternity itself (HUTHER). *Amen* is the usual conclusion of doxologies, as in 1 Pet. iv. 11; v. 11.

The Epistle ends very abruptly, without any personal greetings, a sign of the genuineness of the Epistle. PLUMMER: "His heart is too full of the fatal dangers which threaten the whole Christian community to think of himself and his personal friends. At the opening of his Epistle he hurries to his subject at once, and presses on, without pause or break, and now that he has unburdened his heart, he cares to say no more, but ends at once with a tribute of praise to the Master that bought him."

# SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

## TO THE

### FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

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1. *The Author of the Epistle.* That the author of this Epistle is the Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, who wrote the Gospel, has been the unanimous testimony of the Church in all times. The same proofs which are given to establish the fact that the Fourth Gospel was written by the Apostle John apply also to this Epistle, for there is such a close resemblance between the two in style, structure, vocabulary, and thought, that these two books cannot but be regarded as written by the same author. Though the writer does not mention his name, he asserts that he was an eye-witness of the events in the life of Christ (1 John i. 1-3), and writes with the authority of an Apostle.

Of the early life of St. John we have very little information. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, the sister of the Virgin Mary (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25; so also Wieseler, Luecke, Meyer, Gloag, Farrar, Tischendorf, Luthardt, Weiss, Westcott, etc.), and the younger brother of James the Martyr (Acts xii. 1, 2). The two brothers grew up on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in or near the western Bethsaida. Their parents were of some influence and possessed considerable means.



We infer this on account of the mention of "the hired servants" (Mark i. 20), their mother's substance (Luke viii. 3), John's own house (John xix. 27), and that John was known to the high priest Caiaphas (John xviii. 15). The two brothers, James and John, were surnamed by our Lord Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder (Mark iii. 18), because of the vehemence, zeal, and intensity which marked their character (Mark ix. 38; x. 35-41; Luke ix. 54). To John belongs the memorable distinction of being the disciple whom Jesus loved (John xix. 26). After Christ's death the glimpses which we obtain of John in the Scriptures are not numerous. His name occurs in the list of the Apostles who met in that upper chamber in Jerusalem immediately after Christ's ascension, and together with Peter, he is the principal character of the earlier chapters of the Acts, his name occurring three times in conjunction with Peter (Acts iii. 4; iv. 13; viii. 14). He does not appear to have been at Jerusalem during Paul's first visit to that city after his conversion (Gal. i. 18, 19), nor do we hear anything of him during the next fourteen years until the Council at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 9; Acts xv. 4, 22), in A. D. 50, though, from all that we know, he does not appear to have taken an active part in its deliberations, for John's character was contemplative rather than active. Scripture says nothing more of John's Apostolic labors. His special work from 50 to 70 A. D. may have been that of teaching and organizing the churches of Judæa. It is highly probable that it was not until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. that John fixed his permanent residence at Ephesus, for early tradition unanimously points to Asia Minor, and to Ephesus in particular, as the scene of the later activity of John. This evidence is too strong to be shaken by hypothetical objections. (1) That John resided in Asia

Minor is implied in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation. (2) We have the uniform testimony of the Fathers that John spent the last years of his life at Ephesus. We will refer to the testimony of only two, that of Irenæus and Polycrates. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, in his celebrated Epistle to Florinus, written about 180 A. D., of which a portion has been preserved by Eusebius (*H. E.* V. 20), says: "When I was yet a boy I saw thee in lower Asia with Polycarp. . . . I can describe both the place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse . . . and the discourses which he used to deliver to the multitude; and how he recounted *his close intercourse with John*, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord." Now Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, and this proves John's residence in Asia Minor. At another place (*Hær.* III. 1) Irenæus makes the statement that "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned back on his breast, published a gospel *during his residence at Ephesus* in Asia." Polycrates, Bishop of *Ephesus*, writing to Victor, Bishop of Rome 190 A. D., about ninety years after the death of St. John, informs us that John was buried in Ephesus. Among "the mighty ashes which sleep" in Asia awaiting the resurrection at the advent of the Lord, he mentions especially Philip (one of the twelve) who sleeps in Hierapolis, and his two daughters, . . . and another daughter of his who taketh her rest in Ephesus, "and moreover John also, who reclined upon the Lord's breast, who was a priest bearing the plate of gold, and a martyr,<sup>1</sup> and a teacher,—*he lies asleep in Ephesus.*" That St. John died at an old age at

<sup>1</sup> Early tradition is almost unanimously in favor of John's dying a natural death. The epithet "martyr" was only applied to him in consequence of the legends about the caldron of oil, the cup of poison, and with reference to his banishment to Patmos.

Ephesus, where he was presiding over the churches of Asia, was the uniform belief of the Christian Church during the second and third centuries, and there is no sufficient reason for doubting this truth. The best attested tradition of the Early Church is that John was banished to Patmos during the persecution under Domitian, and that on the death of that emperor and the succession of Nerva 96 A. D., John was recalled from banishment, and then took up again his abode at Ephesus, where he died about 98–100 A. D. Of the manner of his death nothing definitely is known.

The legends connected with the name of St. John are numerous, and most of them are associated with his residence at Ephesus as Bishop of the churches in Asia Minor. Two well-known stories belong to an earlier period, referring to events connected with John's presence in Rome at the time of Peter's martyrdom, during the Neronian persecution in 64 A. D. Tertullian relates that John was thrown into boiling oil near the site of the Porta Latina, but it had no power to hurt him (*Præscript. Hær.* XXXVI.). Two churches in Rome and a special festival on May 6th perpetuate the tradition. Another legend tells us that he drank a cup of poison which was intended to cause his death, but suffered no harm from it. The memory of this deliverance is preserved in the mediæval representations of the Evangelists, in which John is often represented with a cup from which poison in the form of a serpent is issuing. Of the legends connected with his residence at Ephesus, a few are remarkable for their simplicity and their agreement with the character of John. It was in connection with his journeys in Asia Minor that the episode, told with so much power and beauty by Clement of Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> and known as "St. John and the Robber,"

<sup>1</sup> *Quis Dives*, c. 42. See also Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 399, 400.

took place. According to the narrative, John had commended a noble-looking lad of impetuous spirit to the local Bishop, who had instructed and baptized him. But the Bishop neglecting him, the young man after a while fell away and became a bandit-chief. John, on his next visit, astounded the Bishop by asking for his "deposit,"—"Restore unto me the deposit which I and the Saviour entrusted to thee, with the witness of the Church over which thou dost preside." Then the sad tale had to be told. The aged Apostle rode away to the haunts of the robbers, found the young man, and with tears and entreaties prevailed upon him to return with him, and finally brought him to a true repentance, and restored him to the bosom of the Church. Another legend is John's encounter with the heretic Cerinthus, narrated by Irenæus, who says: "There are those who heard from Polycarp that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus the enemy of truth is within." We may with Dean Stanley regard this story "as a living exemplification of the possibility of uniting the deepest love and gentleness with the sternest denunciation of moral evil." We may conclude with two stories of late authority, but possibly true. Cassian (about 420 A. D.) tells us that St. John in his old age used to find pleasure in the playfulness of a tame partridge, and defended himself against the charge of unworthy trifling by the apologue of the bow that must sometimes be unstrung. Not less beautiful is that other scene which comes before us as the last act of his life, and so lovingly told by Jerome. "The Apostle John," he observes, "tarried at Ephesus to an extreme old age, and could only be carried into the

church in the arms of his disciples. He was unable to address them at length, but was accustomed to stretch forth his hands to his disciples and to exclaim, Little children, love one another. At length his hearers, being wearied with hearing him always repeat the same words, asked him, Master, why dost thou always speak thus? His reply was: It is the Lord's command, and if only this be done it is enough."

2. *The Authenticity of the Epistle.* The external evidence to prove that the Apostle John wrote this letter is strong and conclusive. Polycarp (116 A. D.), the disciple of John, refers to it in his letter to the Philippians (chap. vii.), Papias (120 A. D.), a hearer of John, and an associate of Polycarp, made use of it (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* III. 39), Irenæus (180 A. D.) mentions this Epistle and "cites many testimonies from it" (Euseb. *H. E.* V. 8). This evidence of Irenæus has a double value, first, because he was a disciple of Polycarp, who was himself a pupil of John, and secondly, because Irenæus gives such clear testimony to the authenticity of the Gospel of John. For it is now generally admitted by critics of all schools that the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote also what is known as 1 John, so that the evidence of the genuineness of the one may be used as evidence of the genuineness of the other. It is mentioned in the Muratorian Canon (170 A. D.) as written by John, and this Epistle is included in the oldest versions of the East (the Peshito) and of the West (Old Italic), and in all the Catalogues of the books of Scripture. It is quoted by Clement of Alexandria (190 A. D.) and by Tertullian (200 A. D.), the earliest Fathers of Africa whose writings have come down to us. Eusebius (325 A. D.) speaks of the Epistle as being universally acknowledged as genuine (*H. E.* III. 25); and there is no reason whatever to ques-

tion the genuineness of the Epistle, as has been done by the Tuebingen school. Equally strong and convincing is the internal evidence obtained by a close comparison of the Epistle with the Gospel of John, for there is a striking resemblance between the two. Not only is there a strong similarity of expression, but no less than thirty-five passages are common to the Fourth Gospel and this Epistle. Long lists of these parallelisms are given by Eichhorn, Guericke, Alexander, Westcott, Plummer, and others. Westcott also calls attention to the fact "that the writer of the Epistle speaks throughout with the authority of an Apostle. He claims naturally and simply an immediate knowledge of the fundamental facts of the Gospel (i. 1; iv. 14), and that special knowledge which was possessed only by the most intimate disciples of the Lord (i. 1)."<sup>1</sup>

3. *The Persons Addressed.* The question has often been discussed whether 1 John is to be regarded as an Epistle or a small treatise. Many suppose it to be a brief didactic discourse or a Pastoral letter. Westcott favors this view: "Perhaps we can best look at the writing not as a letter called out by any particular circumstance, but as a Pastoral addressed to those who had been carefully trained and had lived long in the faith; and, more particularly, to those who were familiar either with the teaching contained in the Fourth Gospel or with the record itself." Though it has not the specific marks of a letter, its substance is that of an epistle. It may be regarded as a *circular* letter, a pastoral addressed primarily to the circle of Asiatic churches, of which Ephesus was the centre. Such was the view of all the early Fathers, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian. From the fact that all the

<sup>1</sup> *The Epistles of St. John*, p. xxxi.

churches of Proconsular Asia were chiefly composed of Gentile Churches, and as there are no quotations from the O. T., we may infer that the letter was addressed mainly to Gentile Christians, and from its contents we learn that the readers had been carefully instructed in the doctrines and duties of Christianity and had already lived long in the faith.

4. *Time and Place of Writing.* We have no *direct* evidence to show when and where the Epistle was written. But the indirect evidence, both internal and external, points to a late period of the Apostolic age. It is most probable that the Apocalypse, the Gospel, and the Epistles of John were all composed about the same time, and ancient tradition is unanimous in affirming that John spent the last twenty years of his life in Ephesus as his usual residence. It is highly probable that the Epistle was written after the Gospel. "The circumstances of the Christian Society point clearly to a late date, and this may be fixed with reasonable likelihood in the last decade of the first century. The later years of St. John were spent in Ephesus; and, in the absence of any other indication, it is natural to suppose that it was written there" (WESTCOTT).

5. *Relation of the Epistle to the Gospel of John.* The close connection between the Epistle and the Gospel of John has been universally recognized. Some even have maintained that the Epistle was written with a designed reference to the Gospel,—as a preface and introduction to the Gospel, or as a supplement and postscript, or else that it was a companion volume, if not a comment upon the Gospel. PLUMMER: "The Epistle appears to have been intended as a *companion to the Gospel*, . . . as a comment on the Gospel, 'a sermon with the Gospel for its text.' . . . St. John's Gospel has been called a sum-

mary of *Christian Theology*, his first Epistle a summary of *Christian Ethics*. This classification will help us to give definiteness to the statement that the Epistle was written to be a companion to the Gospel. They both supply us with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But in the Gospel these are given as the foundations of the Christian's faith; in the Epistle they are given as the foundation of the Christian's *life*. . . . We may in summary say that the Gospel is objective, the Epistle subjective; the one is historical, the other moral; the one gives us the theology of the Christ, the other the ethics of the Christian; the one is didactic, the other polemical; the one states the truth as a thesis, the other as an anti-thesis; the one starts from the human side, the other from the divine; the one proves that the Man Jesus is the Son of God, the other insists that the Son of God is come in the flesh. But the connection between the two is intimate and organic throughout. The Gospel suggests principles of conduct which the Epistle lays down explicitly; the Epistle implies facts which the Gospel states as historically true." On the whole, however, it is best to regard these two works of the same author, though composed about the same time, as independent of each other, and each one complete in itself. A close comparison also establishes the fact that the polemical element, hardly noticeable in the Gospel, is stronger in the Epistle.

6. *The Character of the Epistle.* Wordsworth calls attention to the fact that each of the General Epistles has a special character of its own, and that it was John's special office in this Epistle to defend the doctrine of the Incarnation against the heresies affecting the doctrine of the two natures of Christ united in one Person, which already had sprung up in Apostolic times, and against



which Paul had given solemn warning in his farewell charge to the *Elders of Ephesus* (Acts xx. 28-30). No one could be better qualified for this work than John, for he had been admitted into the closest intimacy with the Incarnate Word, and had seen Christ die on the cross, and had beheld His pierced side, from which "there came out blood and water" (John xix. 34). The very surroundings under which John wrote, the heresies with which he had to contend, gave the special character to his Epistle. These heresies were mainly four: (1) The heresy of the Ebionites—that Jesus was a mere *man*; (2) the heresy of Cerinthus—that Christ was an æon or emanation from God who descended upon the man *Jesus* at His baptism, but left Him again before His crucifixion; (3) the heresy of the *Docetæ*, of whom Simon Magus was the leader,—that Christ had no *real body*, but that He suffered merely in *appearance*; and (4) the heresy of the Nicolaitans—who as far as we can learn were Gentile Christians carried away by Antinomianism and Libertinism, abusing Paul's doctrine of Christian freedom.

Of all commentators Plummer develops the characteristics of the Epistle in the most sympathetic manner: "Two characteristics will strike every serious reader,—the almost oppressive *majesty of the thoughts* which are put before us, and the extreme *simplicity of the language* in which they are expressed. The most profound mysteries in the Divine scheme of redemption, the spiritual and moral relations between God, the human soul, the world, and the evil one, and the fundamental principles of Christian Ethics, are all stated in words which any intelligent child can understand. Their ease and simplicity and repose irresistibly attract us. Even the unwilling ear is arrested and listens. We are held as by a spell. . . .

"Another characteristic is its *finality*. As St. John's

Gospel, not merely in time, but in conception and form and point of view, is the last of the Gospels, so this is the last of the Epistles. It rises above and consummates all the rest. . . . It is indeed no handbook or summary of Christian doctrine; for it is written expressly for those who 'know the truth;' and therefore much is left unstated, because it may be taken for granted. But in no other book in the Bible are so many cardinal doctrines touched, or with so firm a hand. Closely connected with this characteristic of finality is another which it shares with the Gospel,—the tone of *magisterial authority* which pervades the whole. None but an Apostle, perhaps we may almost venture to say, none but the last surviving Apostle, could write like this. There is no fierce denunciation of those who are opposed to him, no attempt at a compromise, no anxiety about the result. He will not argue the point; he states the truth and leaves it. Every sentence seems to tell of the conscious authority and resistless though unexerted strength of one who has 'seen and heard and handled' the Eternal Word, and who 'knows that his witness is true.' Once more, there is throughout the Epistle a *love of moral and spiritual antithesis*. Over against each thought there is constantly placed in sharp contrast its opposite. Thus light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, life and death, love of the Father and love of the world, the children of God and the children of the devil, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, sin unto death and sin not unto death, to do righteousness and to do sin, follow one another in impressive alternation. The movement of the Epistle largely consists of progress from one opposite to another."

7. *The Plan of the Epistle.* It is very difficult to analyze this Epistle, and some have even maintained that there is no systematic arrangement at all,—John writing

in detached aphoristic sentences. But though his method is not so dialectical as that of Paul, it is a mistake to suppose that he has no plan. This plan however is difficult to trace, and each commentator has tried to improve upon the labors of others. It is exceedingly interesting to compare the analyses adopted by such commentators as Duesterdieck, Huther, Haupt, Westcott, and Plummer. The last, whose analysis is perhaps as good as can be made, says: "Probably few commentators have satisfied themselves with their own analysis of this Epistle; still fewer have satisfied other people. Only those who have seriously attempted it know the real difficulties of the problem. It is like analyzing the face of the sky or the sea. . . . But about one point most students of the Epistle will agree; that it is better to read it under the guidance of any scheme that will at all coincide with its contents, than with no guidance whatever. Jewels, it is true, remain jewels, even when piled confusedly into a heap; but they are then seen to the very least advantage. Any arrangement is better than that. So also with St. John's utterances in this Epistle. They are robbed of more than half their power if they are regarded as a string of detached aphorisms, with no more organic unity than a collection of proverbs."

The analysis here given is largely based upon the labors of previous commentators, and has gradually taken shape during the writing of this commentary, "and if it helps any other student to frame a better analysis for himself, it will have served its purpose."

#### I. I John i. 1-4. INTRODUCTION.

1. The Living Christ the Subject-Matter of the Gospel Message (i. 1-3.)
2. The Aim of the Epistle (i. 4.)

- II. 1 John i. 5—ii. 28. THE NATURE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.
3. God is Light (i. 5).
  4. The Evidence of True Fellowship with God (i. 6, 7).
  5. The Confession of the Contrite Believer (i. 8—10).
  6. Christ is the only Remedy for Sin (ii. 1—2).
  7. The Signs that Christ is efficacious in us (ii. 3—6).
  8. Love of the Brethren (ii. 7—11).
  9. Reasons for Writing (ii. 12—14).
  10. A Warning against Love of the World (ii. 15—17).
  11. Warning against the Antichrists (ii. 18—28).
- III. 1 John ii. 29—iii. 24. THE FRUIT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS HOLINESS.
12. The Children of God and the Children of the Devil contrasted (ii. 29—iii. 12).
  13. Brotherly Love and the Hatred of the World contrasted (iii. 13—18).
  14. The Fruit of Love (iii. 19—24).
- IV. 1 John iv. 1—6. THE LAW OF FELLOWSHIP IS TRUTH.
15. The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error contrasted (iv. 1—6).
- V. 1 John iv. 7—21. THE LIFE OF FELLOWSHIP IS LOVE.
16. Brotherly Love is the active Principle of the Christian Life (iv. 7—21).
- VI. 1 John v. 1—12. THE ROOT OF FELLOWSHIP IS FAITH.
17. The Power and Witness of Faith (v. 1—12).

## VII. 1 John v. 13-21. CONCLUSION.

18. The Aim of the Epistle restated (v. 13).

19. Confidence in Prayer (v. 14-17).

20. Assurance of Christian Knowledge (v. 18-20).

21. Final Warning (v. 21).

8. *Select Literature.* In addition to the Literature given in the General Introduction to the General Epistles, pp. vii, viii, we would call attention to the following:

Duesterdieck, *Die Drei Johanneischen Briefe*, 2 vols. Goett. 1852-54.

Ebrard, *The Epistles of St. John*, Edinburgh, 1860.

Haupt, *The First Epistle of St. John*, Edinburgh, 1879.

Lias, *The First Epistle of John*, 1887.

Luecke, *The Epistles of John*, 1837, Third Ger. ed., 1856.

Luther, *Two Expositions in Walch*, vol. 9, pp. 909-1079 and pp. 1079-1251.

Macdonald, *Life and Writings of St. John*, 1877.

Maurice, *First Epistle of John*, 1867.

Neander, *First Epistle of John practically explained*, 1853.

Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, The Greek Text with Notes and Essays, 1883.

The four best Commentaries on the Greek text of the First Epistle of John are by Haupt, Braune, Huther, and Westcott, and on the English text we would especially recommend the Commentaries of Plummer, Alexander, and Lias.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### I. THE LIVING CHRIST THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

1-3. That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) ; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us : yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The Introduction (i. 1-4) naturally falls under two heads, the first three verses treating of the subject-matter of the Gospel Message, and the fourth verse of the special aim of this Epistle. There is a very close connection between this Introduction and the Prologue to John's Gospel (i. 1-18), but the two passages are not parallel, but complementary, both treating of the Incarnate Word, but from different points of view. The *form* which this Introduction takes, so different from that found in the other Epistles of the N. T., reminds us of the exordium to the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 1-4). The very length of the sentence testifies to the emotion with which it was written. The structure is somewhat involved. The main verb is *we declare* of verse 3, and

enlarged as is the sentence and containing a long parenthesis, we have after all to deal only with a simple sentence, which has as the object of the verb the subject-matter of the declaration, and which also states the purpose of the declaration, and the whole may be summed up in these words: *We declare unto you the Incarnate Word that ye may have fellowship with us.*

**1. That which.** The neuter *that which* is used for the masculine *He who*. This usage is common with St. John (John iv. 22; vi. 37; xvii. 2). "The neuter is naturally used where the most comprehensive term is wanted: comp. 1 Cor. i. 27; Col. i. 20; Eph. i. 10" (LIGHTFOOT on Gal. iii. 22). The Socinian interpretation, that "that which" means the *doctrine* of Jesus, and not the Incarnate Word, or that it refers to "the mystery of God," namely, the revelation that God was manifested in the flesh, and not to the personal Christ, cannot be maintained, because the verbs "have seen," "beheld," "handled," are fatal to it. **Was from the beginning.** The reference is to the personal Christ according to His divine nature, as Son of God, who has been from all eternity (John i. 1-3; xvii. 5; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Eph. i. 4; iii. 9). The meaning of this phrase will become clearer if we compare it with John i. 1-18, only that in the Prologue to the Gospel the stress is laid on the fact that the Word existed before the Creation, while here in the Epistle the fact that the Word existed before the Incarnation is emphasized. So likewise the description of Christ given in Rev. xxii. 13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," is intended to teach the truth, not only that Christ lives through all time, but that He is above time. In this whole sentence the idea of the Son of God as the Eternal Life is in the Apostle's mind, and he here makes the assertion that the

Eternal Life concerning which he speaks was already in existence before all time,—existing therefore before His manifestation in the flesh, the great theme of this Epistle. **That which we have heard.** John now passes from eternity to time. Christ is not only eternal and divine, but He has become incarnate and manifested Himself to human perception and experience. We need not refer “that which” in the different clauses of this sentence to different things, as if the Apostle meant to say, We have heard *His words*, we have seen *His miracles*, we beheld *His glory*, our hands handled *His resurrection-body*,—all this is indeed true, but John’s idea is not that he experienced this or that in Christ,—but he has heard, seen, looked upon, and handled *Christ Himself*, the Incarnate Word, the Eternal Life. **That which we have seen with our eyes.** In this whole section John uses the plural *we* including his fellow-Apostles, of whom he was the last survivor, for they all had the same personal experience. Note the gradation discernible between the first pair of predicates *heard* and *seen*, and between the second pair *beheld* and *handled*. *To see with the eye* stands higher than *hearing*,—it indicates the most incontestable evidence; to *behold* is stronger than *seeing*, for it implies a purposed and most diligent beholding, while *to handle* indicates investigation pursued to the utmost exactitude in order to convince one’s self of the reality and nature of an object. “With all the language at his command John insists on the reality of the Incarnation, of which he can speak from personal knowledge based on the combined evidence of all the senses” (PLUMMER). **That which we beheld, and our hands handled.** We have here a change of tense, the first two verbs being in the *perfect*, and these two in the *aorist*. The *aorist* probably refer to a definite occasion on which the beholding and



handling took place, as at His appearance after His resurrection (John xx. 24; Luke xxiv. 39). No greater proof of the reality of the Incarnation of our Lord could possibly be given. "John adduces such strong evidence of this manifestation as to find it no longer necessary to quote the prophets" (BENGEL). **Concerning the Word of Life.** That is Christ, the personal Logos. This clause is in apposition to the preceding clauses, stating more particularly to what these descriptive sentences refer. "This certainly does not mean the word, written or preached, whose subject is the spiritual and eternal life; but the Personal Word, the Logos, whose attribute it is that He is the life; who is at once both the Word and the Life" (ALEXANDER).

2. **And the life was manifested.** Of the two ideas contained in "the Word of life," John takes up the latter. Because the Word became flesh (1 John iv. 2; John i. 14), this Life presents itself to us as manifested. **And we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life.** Note the climax in the verbs used. A true testimony aims to serve the cause of truth, and rests always on personal experience, hence the verb *seen* precedes the verb *bear witness*. What the Apostle knows he would communicate to his readers and hearers. "The three verbs give in due sequence the ideas of personal experience, responsible affirmation, authoritative announcement, which are combined in the Apostolic message" (WESTCOTT). **The eternal life.** When Christ calls Himself Life (John xi. 25; xiv. 6), or is called *eternal life* (1 John v. 20), emphasis is laid upon the internal quality of the divine life, "a life is meant which really and truly is life, life in the fullest sense, life and nothing but life; in a word, *divine life*; while all earthly life is in some sense death" (HAUPT). **Which was with the Father, and was mani-**

**fested unto us.** "With the Father" corresponds to "with God" of John i. 1. *The Life* is here spoken of as a distinct Personality. The eternal life of the Logos with the Father, and the earthly life in which the Logos was manifested to us, are but diverse forms in which *the eternal life* subsists. Of "eternal life" which the believer possesses in Christ in the sense as used in 1 John ii. 25 ; iii. 15 ; v. 11, 13, there is here no mention at all, but the reference is to Christ Himself. This whole verse is parenthetical.

3. **That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.** Stress is again laid upon the assurance of the truth that the eternal life was manifested. John had often proclaimed this truth, but his readers, *you also*, were believingly to accept it, in order that they might have fellowship with himself and the other Apostles. This *fellowship* is that communion of Christ in faith and love, which was brought about by the Apostolic preaching. **Yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His son Jesus Christ.** *Our* fellowship, i. e. of *us* the Apostles and *you* the readers of this Epistle, is at the same time and essentially a fellowship with God the Father and with His Son. The full description as given here of Christ (in the Greek) marks emphatically the distinction between the Father and the Son, as well as their equality.

## 2. THE AIM OF THE EPISTLE.

4. And these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.

4. **And these things we write.** *These things* contained in this Epistle. John uses the plural *we* not after the manner of authors, but because he is speaking for all the Apostles, as his teaching is in perfect agreement with

their teaching. **That our joy may be fulfilled.** Many ancient authorities read *your* joy. (Comp. John xv. 11 ; xvii. 13 ; Phil. ii. 2 ; iv. 4.) *Our* joy may refer either to the Apostolic joy that the Word brings forth fruit among their hearers, or to "your joy as well as ours." This joy will be promoted if this fellowship with the Son and the Father and with the brethren will continue and become more intimate, for the perfection of joy is not instantaneous, but has its stages of growth. Joy is the very essence of true Christianity, and just as Christ's life becomes our life through faith, so can Christ's joy become our joy (John xv. 11) through faith (Phil. i. 25).

### 3. GOD IS LIGHT.

5. And this is the message which we have heard from him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

5. **And this is the message which we have heard from him.** From *Him*, that is, *Christ*, the Son of God manifested in the flesh, whom the Apostle himself had heard. **And announce unto you.** Not the same as *declare*, for it includes the idea of proclaiming *again* what has been heard from Christ. **That God is Light.** This is the theme of the first main division of the Epistle (i. 5-ii. 28). "There are three statements in the Bible which stand alone as revelations of the Nature of God, and they are all in the writings of St. John: 'God is spirit' (John iv. 24); 'God is light,' and 'God is love' (1 John iv. 8). In all these momentous statements the predicate has no article, either definite or indefinite. Spirit, light, love, are His very nature. They are not mere attributes, like mercy and justice; they are Himself. They are probably the nearest approach to a definition of God that the human mind could frame or comprehend; and in the

history of thought and religion they are unique. The more we consider them, the more they satisfy us. The simplest intellect can understand their meaning, the subtlest cannot exhaust it. No figure borrowed from the material world could give the idea of perfection so clearly and fully as *light*. It suggests ubiquity, brightness, happiness, intelligence, truth, purity, holiness" (PLUMMER). God is to the spiritual what light is to the physical vision. As John calls God light in this passage, so he calls Christ "the true light" in ii. 8. **And in him is no darkness at all.** There is no impurity, sin, or falsehood in God. This is stated in the strongest manner possible.

#### 4. THE EVIDENCE OF TRUE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

6, 7. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth : but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

**6. If we say that we have fellowship with him.** With God *the Father*. He states the case hypothetically, and with great delicacy includes himself, so as to make the reference more general and forcible. **And walk in the darkness.** Live in sin, giving evidence of this in all our inward acts and outward actions. **We lie.** For what "communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. v. 14). **And do not the truth.** That is, we do that which does not correspond to the nature and will of God.

**7. But if we walk in the light.** There is a close connection between the biblical idea of leading a life of repentance and faith and *walking in the light*, the latter, however, being the consequence of the former. To walk in the light means more than simply living a life of personal holiness,—it implies that the believer has commun-

ion with God, "that the kingdom of God is the element of his life which surrounds him, the air of which he breathes, and the breath of which encircles him with its nourishing influence" (HAUPT). **As he is in the light.** Not only is the nature of God light, but light is also the element in which He subsists and lives. **We have fellowship one with another.** The evidence of "walking in the light" manifests itself in two ways; (1) in the love of the brethren, for fellowship with the brethren is the fruit of true fellowship with God, and (2) in progressive sanctification. **And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.** The word *blood* emphasizes the reality of Christ's human nature, of His sufferings, death, and expiatory sacrifice. When John speaks of the *cleansing from all sin* he refers not only to the daily justification of the believer which is here implied, but especially to his sanctification, for the blood is *ever cleansing* us from all sin. He who *walks in the light* must ever progress in a life of sanctification. Sin must ever more and more disappear.

## 5. THE CONFESSION OF THE CONTRITE BELIEVER.

8-10. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

8. **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.** If the believer must ever more and more die unto sin, and if the blood of Jesus purifies us ever more and more, this presupposes the existence of sin even in those believers who have made the greatest progress in sanctification. This includes both original and actual sin, and this is true of all Christians, and only Jesus Christ Himself is the one exception (1 Pet. ii. 22).

Although we are born of God, and no longer walk in darkness, nevertheless we do not cease to have sin. If we deny this we mislead ourselves **and the truth is not in us**. This does not mean simply that we are not *truthful*, but that truth in its objective character no longer dwells in us. The regenerate man who has no perception of this, and is not conscious that he still has sin, original and actual, lies to himself, and through pride and self-righteousness brings upon himself still greater sin and guilt, for there is a fundamental departure from the truth.

9. **If we confess our sins.** Not only must the believer have a consciousness of sin within him, but there must also be a confession of *our sins*, those actual and concrete sins which are the particular manifestations that we have sin in us. This confession must not only be an inward acknowledgment, but a *real* (even if not *always vocal*) expression and confession of our sins before God. We may, with Luther, distinguish between three kinds of confession: (1) that before God (Ps. xxxii. 5), without which there can be no forgiveness at all; (2) that before men, especially to those whom we have wronged. This like the former is necessary for forgiveness (see notes on James v. 16); (3) that before the Church, provided for in the General Confession of sin and Absolution before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or in the private confession and absolution of the contrite believer, who makes use of the privileges provided by God in the office of the ministry, by seeking his pastor or spiritual guardian of his soul, to receive instruction and comfort for a disquieted conscience. This last must by no means be confounded with the Roman Catholic doctrine of Auricular Confession. (See notes on James v. 16.) **He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins.** If we truly con-

fess our sins with a penitent and believing heart, and trust only in the merits of Christ obtained by his passive and active obedience, God the Father will surely forgive us our sins, for He is *faithful*, He has promised forgiveness, and He will most faithfully keep His promise (Heb. x. 23), and He is also *righteous*, and His righteousness demands that the contrite believer be forgiven, for atonement has been made for him by His own Son. God is *righteous* who will forgive the sins of those who believe and confess their sins, and impute to them the righteousness acquired by Christ through His active obedience. **And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** On account of His faithfulness and righteousness, the Father as the origin of all grace also operates in our sanctification, although the *blood* of Christ is the means which by its purifying power brings about our purification from sin, and this *blood* is especially applied to our hearts and conscience through the Word and Sacraments by the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

10. **If we say that we have not sinned.** John, in this whole section, is speaking of Christians. He has shown that although as true believers we continually receive forgiveness of our sins (and this shows that Christians are always *sinning* in the sight of God, both on account of original sin in us, and actual sins, which latter may be either sins of omission or commission), and though we are continually dying unto sin and progressing in a life of sanctification, we still always will have sin in us (and this shows that absolute perfection of a sinless life is not attainable by us here on earth),—and now he further adds that if a man in his delusion, self-conceit, and pride, and in his ignorance of the teaching of Scripture and his utter lack of true self-knowledge, asserts that he, in his

Christian life as a believer, has not sinned, then indeed **we make him** (God) **a liar**, for if God is faithful to forgive our sins, we must have sins, **and his word is not in us**, the truth of the Word of God has not yet been understood and apprehended. The great truth taught in this paragraph is that Christians are *saints*, but only in process of *becoming* such, not as if already complete and perfect (Phil. iii. 12-16). We must always clearly distinguish between justification or forgiveness of sins, and sanctification. Both are an act of God, but the first takes place outside us, and refers to a change in our relation to God, while the second takes place within us. In what is known as the *Holiness doctrine* advocated by so many in modern times, there is no clear apprehension of the distinction between Justification and Sanctification. Also altogether unwarranted is the distinction drawn that the *forgiveness of sins* takes place on this earth, but the *cleansing from unrighteousness* in purgatory. (See notes on 1 Pet. iv. 6.)



## CHAPTER II.

### 6. CHRIST IS THE ONLY REMEDY FOR SIN.

1, 2. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

1. **My little children.** John calls his readers *children* because of his age and fatherly care for them, and he uses the diminutive because of his affection for them. (So also ii. 12, 28; iii. 18; iv. 4; v: 21.) **These things write I unto you.** *These things* refer especially to what has been said in the preceding chapter in verses 5-10. **That ye may not sin.** This designates the special object which the Apostle had in view in writing what precedes, for these two verses are closely connected with the preceding chapter. John now sets before us the ideal Christian life. He who walks in the light (i. 7) has fellowship with God (i. 3), and the aim of this communion is to purify us from all sin, for God is light (i. 6). But this purifying process, on account of the sin that ever remains in the Christian (i. 8-10), is not completed at one stroke. Sanctification is a gradual attainment, just as knowledge of all kinds can only be gradually attained. In i. 5-10 John has laid down fundamental principles, and now he exhorts believers to live up to their ideal life. **And if any man sin.** It is implied that the Christian will commit sin. Whether it is possible for the Christian ever to attain to that state of perfection so that he does *not* sin, John does not say,

but from i. 8-10, we can infer that the believer as long as he is on this earth can never attain to absolute sinless perfection. He will always need an Advocate with the Father. This is written for our comfort. **We have an Advocate** (*Comforter* or *Helper*, Greek *Paraclete*) **with the Father.** The Christian will indeed sin, but he cannot remain in his sins. He sins not with the wilfulness of sin, but in spite of the will of his mind, but he who remains in his sins has no Advocate with God. In John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7, the Holy Ghost is called the *Paraclete* or *Comforter* because by His witness He leads the disciples into all truth, but there is no contradiction when Christ is here called a *Paraclete*, for Christ in John xiv. 16 expressly speaks of another *Paraclete*, "by which Christ signifies that He Himself is the proper *Paraclete*, and the Holy Ghost His substitute" (HUTH.). The word *Paraclete* has a general and a special meaning. In the former it means *Helper* or *Comforter* used of the Holy Ghost, and in its more special forensic meaning it signifies *Advocate* in the sense of Intercessor, as applied to Christ. **Jesus Christ the righteous.** He, the Righteous one, "just and stainless, and without sin" (LUTHER), the incarnate Logos, who has shed His blood on the cross, and who "through His own blood entered in once for all into the holy place" (Heb. ix. 12), "into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (Heb. ix. 24), who also "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). In Christ exalted to heaven interceding for believers, the typical action of the high priest interceding for the people of God has reached its complete fulfilment. Huther has a suggestive note defining more particularly Christ's office as our Advocate, which we here give in summary. (1) Our Advocate is

Jesus, the glorified Redeemer, who is with the Father—in His divine-human personality. (2) It is implied that by His blood Christ has made atonement for the sins of men. (3) This advocacy or intercession has reference to believers, who still sin amid their walking in the light. (4) It is a real activity in which He intercedes (*oral intercession*) for believers that God may manifest in their forgiveness and sanctification His faithfulness and justice.

2. **And he**, Jesus Christ the righteous, **is the propitiation**. Only here and iv. 10. Christ is both the High Priest and the sacrifice, both the propitiator and the propitiatory expiation, for by His blood He has made expiation for the guilt of sin. The abstract word *propitiation* is used because He is “not the Propitiator through anything outside Himself, but through Himself” (LUECKE). Thus He is also called our sanctification (1 Cor. i. 30). **For our sins**. Of believers, both *before* and *after* their conversion. **And not for ours only, but also for the whole world**. His blood was shed as a propitiation for *all* sins, but as an *Advocate* His intercession has reference only to the sins of believers.

## 7. THE SIGNS THAT CHRIST IS EFFICACIOUS IN US.

3-6. And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him: he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

3. **And hereby know we that we know him**. The Apostle reminds us that we may test our true relation (1) by the sign of true knowledge (verses 3-5*a*), and (2) by the sign of true union (verses 5*b*, 6). It is difficult to decide whether *Him* refers to *Christ* or to *God*. It is prob-

ably best to refer it to *God*, not excluding the reference to Christ. **If we keep his commandments.** This is the sign of a true living knowledge of God and of Christ. There is only one way of proving to ourselves that we know God, and this is by obeying His will.

4. **He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.** This is a much stronger statement than in i. 6. **And the truth is not in him.** (Compare notes on i. 8.)

5. **But whoso keepeth his word.** The *word* of God refers to the whole revelation of God, and covers more than *His commandments*. BENDEL: "His *precepts* are many; His *word* is one." **In him verily hath the love of God been perfected.** Some, indeed (Calovius, Bengel, Spener, etc.), interpret "the love of God to us" as in iv. 9, but the context shows that John had in view the love the believer has towards God (so Luther, Calvin, Luecke, Braune, Huther, etc.). HUTHER: "Where the Word of God is perfectly fulfilled, there love to God is perfect; in perfect obedience, perfect love is shown. That the Christian has not attained this perfection at any moment of his life, but is ever only in a state of progress towards it, is indeed true; but John is not here considering that aspect." **Hereby know we that we are in him.** This may refer to what precedes, in which case the "keeping of God's Word" is a proof that we are in Him. But it may also refer to what follows in verse 6, which is a more explicit statement, in what the fruit of a true union consists.

6. **He that saith he abideth in him.** That is, abideth *in God*. BENDEL: "To *know Him*, to *be in Him*, to *abide in Him*, are synonymous terms for successive conditions." Note the climax. To *abide in* implies *habitual* fellowship. **Ought himself also to walk even as he (Christ) walked.** This is the duty of him who *says* that

he abides in God. Christ is our pattern (iii. 3, 7; iv. 17), not only in His humiliation and suffering (see notes on 1 Pet. ii. 21), but in His whole life,—in His keeping the commandments of God, and in His walking in the light. Lias rightly calls our attention to the fact that in the sayings of John, in order to interpret his true meaning, we must bear in mind the perpetual oscillation throughout the Epistle between the ideal and the practical condition of Christians, between the believer as he might be and the believer as he is.

### 8. LOVE OF THE BRETHREN.

7-II. Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

**7. Behold, no new commandment write I unto you.** John is referring to the commandment of brotherly love spoken of in verses 9-II, not to the walking after Christ of verse 6, although practically it makes little difference which answer we give, for both are only different aspects of the Christian's walk in the light, and he who most perfectly *loves his brother* in this is only following in the footsteps of Christ. **But an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.** For this message you heard when the Gospel was first preached to you. John evidently has in mind the saying of Christ, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John xiii. 34).

**The old commandment is the word which ye heard.** This defines more particularly that the commandment, that they should exercise brotherly love, was the one long known to them, and which had been proclaimed to them by the Apostles.

**8. Again, a new commandment write I unto you.** In one sense the commandment of brotherly love was an *old* one, which they had known since they had become Christians; in another sense it is a new commandment, for he writes it anew to them. **Which thing is true in him and in you.** *Which thing*, that this commandment of brotherly love is a *new* one, is true in Christ, for it was only brought into the world through the self-sacrificing example of Christ, and is true in you *believers*, because it can only be attained through fellowship with Him, and must ever continue a *new* commandment for you. Christ was the living embodiment and example of it; you, in striving to walk as He walked, must ever set it before you as your ideal. **Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.** A negative and a positive reason why He writes to them this new commandment which has been proved true by the example of Christ and by their own experience. He sees the darkness of sin, unbelief, and selfishness passing away, and Christ as the true light through His Gospel of truth and holiness shining in the world. It is difficult to decide whether John is here referring to the general progress already made by Christianity, or whether, as is most probable, he is looking forward to a future time, which he regards as close at hand (the last hour, i. 18), when it is especially important for believers to show themselves children of light. In almost every verse of this difficult portion of the Epistle, the divergencies of interpretation are almost endless.

9. **He that saith he is in the light.** Which implies that he walks in the light, and has fellowship with God and with Christ (i. 3) and one with another (i. 7). **And hateth his brother.** By *brother* is here meant a Christian brother, a fellow-believer. **Is in the darkness.** For where hatred is there can be no fellowship, and where there is no light there is darkness. **Even until now.** Although the light shineth, the fact that he hates his brother is a proof that he is nevertheless *still* in darkness.

10. **He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.** For this brotherly love is a proof that he has fellowship with his brother, and that he is in the light, and that he walks in the light (i. 7). **And there is none occasion of stumbling in him.** There is not in him that which offends, which causes either *himself* or *others* to stumble and fall. Some would limit the reference of the stumbling to the believer himself, others to the giving offence to the brethren. It is perhaps best to retain both references.

11. **But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness.** The *condition of being* in the darkness is one thing, the *result, walking* in the darkness, is another, and is the fruit of the first. Brotherly hatred is a proof of *walking* in the darkness, which presupposes the disposition and state of *being* in the darkness. **And knoweth not whither he goeth.** Following the impulse of his own selfish desires he does not know what he really is doing and what the end will be. He does not realize that there is a deep abyss into which he is walking. "They fancy that they are going to rest and glory, and yet go to hell" (LUTHER). **Because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.** "He who lives in sin is blinded by sin, and therefore does not know whither his sin is leading him" (HUTHER). (See 2 Cor. iv. 4.)

## 9. REASONS FOR WRITING.

**12-14.** I write unto you, *my* little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye know him which is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know him which is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.

**12. I write unto you.** Notice that in these three verses we have two triads, each consisting of little children, fathers, and young men, with a change of the present tense *I write* (*thrice*) to the past (aorist) *I wrote* (*thrice*). It is best to refer the present *I write* to this Epistle, and the past *I wrote* to the Gospel of John. On the whole this seems the most satisfactory. ***My little children.*** This must be taken in the same sense as in ii. 1, 28; iii. 18; iv. 4; v. 21, as applying to all the readers of this Epistle. (See notes on ii. 1.) In each group first all Christians are addressed, and then specially the older and younger members of the Church. ***Because your sins are forgiven you.*** The particle is causal (*because*) and not declarative (*that*). John says that their sins *have been forgiven* (perfect passive in Greek), but this past forgiveness implies also present forgiveness. ***For his name's sake.*** Of Christ, for whose sake the Father forgives. As *dia* is here used with the accusative, it is best to interpret this phrase as referring to the *subjective* ground of forgiveness (instead of the *objective* ground which would be Christ Himself), in the sense of, because ye believe on His name.

**13. I write unto you, fathers.** By *fathers* are meant the older and more matured members of the Church. ***Because ye know him which is from the beginning.***



That is, *ye have known* and do now *know* Christ, the eternal Logos. The maturer Christians had obtained a deeper and more profound knowledge of the nature and eternal glory of Christ. **I write unto you, young men.** The younger members of the Church. **Because ye have overcome the evil one.** The Greek has perfects in all these statements, "have been forgiven," "have come to know," "have overcome," expressing the abiding result of past action. The *evil one* is the devil (iii. 8, 12 ; v. 18, 19). This statement concerning the young men was also true of the older members of the Church, "but John attributes this pre-eminently to the young men, because *they*, in accordance with their age, had just recently obtained this victory, and their care therefore must be especially this, not to lose again what had been lately won" (HUTHER). **I have written (*wrote*) unto you, little children.** We come now to the second triad or triplet. The Greek has *little ones* instead of *little children* as in verse 12, but it is a diminutive of affection referring to all the believers. **Because ye know the Father.** Literally, *ye have known*. John here gives a reason why he wrote the Gospel to them. In verse 12 the Apostle speaks of his readers as having forgiveness of sins, and here he implies that they have a knowledge of spiritual *truth*, having obtained this knowledge of God the Father, through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ.

14. **I have written (*wrote*) unto you, fathers.** The older members of the Church, as in verse 13. **Because ye know him which is from the beginning.** Both the Gospel and this Epistle (verse 13) were written because his readers knew Christ. "If the forgiveness of sins and knowledge of God are common to all, the knowledge of Him who is 'from the beginning' is specially appropriate to the

older members of the Church" (HUTHER). **I have written** (*wrote*) **unto you, young men.** In my Gospel. **Because ye are strong.** This has special reference to the fight in which they overcame the evil one, and this conquering power did not lie in their own moral strength, but in the strength which the Word of God supplied. **And the Word of God abideth in you.** " Their strength has its ground in the Word of God, the Gospel, which is permanent in them (*abideth*), and it is in this power that they have attained the victory " (HUTHER). **And ye have overcome the evil one.** (See notes on verse 13.) In these three verses the foundation has been laid for the warnings and exhortations which follow.

#### 10. A WARNING AGAINST LOVE OF THE WORLD.

15-17. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

15. **Love not the world.** This warning is addressed to all Christians. In the writings of John the word *kosmos* is used in five different senses, which must be decided by the context, as designating (1) the universe (John xvii. 5, 24); (2) the earth (Rev. xi. 15; John xi. 9); (3) the whole human race (1 John ii. 2; iv. 14); (4) the ungodly who are alienated from God (1 John iii. 1, 13; iv. 5; v. 19); and (5) everything worldly which is opposed to the cause of Christ (*here*; v. 4, 5; John xvi. 33). We are not to love that which in any way interferes with our loving Christ, or which may tempt us to sin. **Neither the things that are in the world.** The things which the world delights in, as riches, honor, power, human wisdom, and earthly glory. **If any man love the world,**

**the love of the Father is not in him.** There is here the same contrast as in Matt. vi. 24, ye cannot love God and the world. For where the love of the world has taken possession of the heart, there is no room for *love to God*. John is here speaking of love to God, not of God's love to us.

16. **For all that is in the world.** The essence of the world, the inner life which animates the sinful world is now analyzed. **The lust of the flesh.** The Apostle now mentions three different modes of the appearance of sin. *The lust of the flesh* is that subjective disposition in sinful man which springs from the corrupted sensual nature of man, and has for its aim the gratification of *unlawful pleasures of sense*, of sensual enjoyments which are sinful either in themselves or in their excessive use. **And the lust of the eyes.** Many would interpret this expression as referring to the desire for wealth, making it substantially synonymous with *avarice*; others limit it too much to dramatic plays, etc. It is best with SPENER to explain: "All sinful desires by which we seek delight in the seeing itself." So also HUTHER: "The desire of seeing unseemly things, and the sinful pleasure which the sight of them affords." **And the vainglory of life.** Lust refers to wrongful desire for what is not possessed, *vain-glory* is a wrong behavior with regard to the *spending* of what is possessed. Vainglory signifies arrogance and vaunting, and this "braggart arrogance" "makes a man wish to be as great as possible in food, dress, means, furniture, buildings, lands, servants, etc. . . . The three cardinal vices, sensuality, avarice, and pride, though they do not coincide with, are yet included in these three forms of sin" (BENGEL). These three evil tendencies naturally recall the three temptations of our Lord, with which there are points of contact,—but these three ten-

dencies do not cover the whole sphere of sinful life. This Luther has already noticed, when he says : " The following three things are not of the Father,—(1) hatred of the brethren ; (2) the three idols of the world ; (3) false and seductive teaching." **Is not of the Father.** All manner of worldliness and lust has not its origin in the Father, nor has it any connection whatever with Him, **but is of the world**, has its origin in the sinful world, which is the source of all ungodliness.

17. **And the world passeth away.** Nowhere in Scripture is it said that the universe as a world of order shall come to an end, but it shall be changed by the events of the Last Day. But this sinful world, " the fashion of this world " (1 Cor. vii. 31), shall pass away, and it is highly probable that John is here thinking of the approaching Second Advent of Christ and of the judgment. The passing away of the darkness (ii. 8), and this passing away of the world are closely connected in thought with " the last hour " of ii.

18. **And the lust thereof.** For with the passing away of this sinful world, the evil tendencies of verse 16 shall also pass away. **But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.** There is a sharp contrast here. The world in the lust which it exhibits does not do the will of God, and it, and its lust, and its pleasure shall pass away, but the *believer abideth for ever*, for all the children of God shall inherit eternal life (John vi. 51, 58).

## II. WARNING AGAINST THE ANTICHRIST.

18-28. Little children, it is the last hour : and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us ; but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he that

denieth that Jesus is the Christ ? This is the antichrist, *even* he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father : he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise which he promised us, *even* the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you ; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him. And now *my* little children, abide in him ; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

**18. Little children, it is the last hour.** Addressed to the readers of the Epistle. (See notes on ii. 1.) *By the last hour* John does not mean the whole period extending from His birth to His Second Advent, but the time immediately preceding the *Parousia*, for John regarded the Second Coming of Christ as near at hand (ii. 8, 28), as did the other Apostles, Peter, James, and Paul. **And as ye heard that antichrist cometh.** The readers of this Epistle had heard about antichrist through the preaching of the Apostles, either through the preaching of Paul and his companions, or from John himself. The name antichrist is not found in Scripture save in the First and Second Epistles of John (*here* and ii. 22 ; iv. 3 ; 2 John 7). Neither here nor in iv. 3 does John say that antichrist has already come. All that he does say is that the *spirit* of antichrist is already in the world. Almost all commentators correctly maintain that John is here referring to *that* enemy of Christ of whom Paul speaks in 2 Thess. ii. 3-10. Like the Second Coming of Christ, this manifestation of Antichrist belongs still to the future. He will appear in the last times before the *Parousia* of Christ. **Even now have there arisen many antichrists.** We must distinguish between *the* Antichrist who is yet to come, and the *antichrists* of whom John here speaks.

Antichrists are such persons who deny that Jesus is the Christ (ii. 22 ; iv. 3 ; 2 John 7), and who are permeated with that anti-Christian spirit which will finally be manifested in its full perfection and power in the *personal antichrist*, who, as an instrument of Satan, will oppose Christ at the time of His Second Coming (2 Thess. ii. 3-10 ; Rev. xiii. 1-10 ; xvii. 7-18). Such antichrists had already appeared in John's time, and there are such always in existence. They are but forerunners of *the Antichrist*. **Whereby we know that it is the last hour.** The appearance of these antichrists shows that the day of judgment is drawing near. John evidently expected that the Second Advent of the Lord would *soon* take place.

**19. They went out from us, but they were not of us.** These antichrists of whom John speaks had formerly been members of the Christian Church, but after all, this fellowship had only been an *outward* one ; they had never really entered into true fellowship with Christ. **For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.** John takes it for granted that *abiding* in the faith is the evidence of *being in the faith*. He does not deny the *possibility* of falling away, but with him he who does not abide in the faith has not yet entered fully into fellowship with the Lord and His Church. This passage does not confirm the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, for John is not speaking of the perseverance of the saints, nor discussing the difference between the *called* and the *elect*.<sup>1</sup> What John does state is that these antichrists had never really had intimate and truly spiritual fellowship with

<sup>1</sup> BRAUNE : " In the passage Heb. vi. 4-6, the lapse of the truly regenerate (as is evident from their description) is supposed to be possible, but the re-conversion of such apostates only is said to be impossible, so that we ought to be afraid."

Christ and Christian believers. **But they went out, that they might be made manifest.** There was a providential design and purpose in the secession of these antichrists from the Church. **How that they all are not of us.** Or, *that not all are of us.* The first would mean, That no one of the antichrists is of us; the second translation, That not all Christians who are called and baptized are and remain true Christians. Both thoughts are true, but the order of the Greek words implies that the Apostle had especially in mind the great truth, that *not all* who belong outwardly to the Christian Church *are* really members of the same.

20. **And ye have an anointing from the Holy One.** This *chrism* or anointing is the Holy Spirit which they have received from Christ, the Holy One. PLUMMER: "Just as the Antichrist has his representatives, so the Anointed one, the Christ, has His. All Christians in a secondary sense are what Christ is in a unique and primary sense, the Lord's anointed. 'These anointed,' says the Apostle to his readers, 'ye are.'" We cannot positively decide from this passage whether John is here thinking of the gift of the Holy Ghost communicated at Baptism, or to the gift continually bestowed by means of the preaching of the Word,—most likely the latter, as we may infer from what follows. **And ye know all things.** Some very ancient authorities read *and ye all know* (this). In virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit ye know the truth, for "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 13).

21. **I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it.** He writes so freely to them about the antichrists because the truth in Christ has been revealed to them and they have the knowledge to distinguish between lies and the truth.

**And because (*that*) no lie is of the truth.** If we translate *because* we must connect the sentence with *have written*, but it is better to translate *that* and make it an object after *ye know*, in the sense that they not only know the truth, but also know that no lie has its origin in the truth. The truth has its origin in God alone, but the lie has its origin in the devil who is the father of lies (John viii. 44).

**22. Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?** BRAUNE: "The interrogative marks the vivacity with which John passes from the abstract *every lie* to the concrete *the liar*." The liar above all others, in whom the lie appears in concrete form is *the* antichrist. The essential feature and character of *the lie* of the antichrist is that the man Jesus who was seen of men, is not the Christ, the promised Saviour, the Word made flesh. **This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son.** The Apostle is thinking of the particular lie which marked the antichrists of his time, but he regards this as the *one* chief and fundamental lie which would characterize *the* Antichrist which would oppose Christ and God at the time of the *Parousia* of Christ. He who denies that Jesus is the Christ in fact denies the Son, for the Son is no other than Jesus the Christ, and he who denies the Son, denies also the Father, for no one can know the Father unless he know the Son.

**23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.** He who separates himself from the Son and denies that He is the Christ, also gives up the Father, for the Father cannot be known without the Son, but **he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also**, for "no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3), and the Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son (John xv. 26).



24. **As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning.** Let the truth of the Gospel, especially that Jesus is the Christ (ii. 22), the Son of God, the Word of Life, even "the eternal life, which was with the Father" (i. 2), dwell *in them* as a living power in their hearts. **If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son.** For our abiding in the Son is the immediate result of the word of truth abiding in us. **And in the Father.** For our fellowship with the Father is the result of our fellowship with the Son. BRAUNE: "The life of believers must really and essentially be rooted in God, and derive nourishment, grow, and mature to completeness in and from Him."

25. **And this is the promise which he promised us.** Some ancient authorities read "promised *you*." The reference is to what follows. John in his Gospel records at least seventeen promises which Christ made concerning *eternal life*. **Even the life eternal.** Not only as something to be attained in the future life, but as already present, for if we abide in the Word, and consequently in the Son and the Father, we now have *the life eternal*.

26. **These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray.** All *these things* concerning the antichrists included in this section (verses 18-28). The aim of these antichrists was to lead men away from Christ.

27. **And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you.** The same thought as in verses 20, 21. They have received the Holy Ghost from Christ, and the Spirit is now abiding in them. **And ye need not that any one teach you.** For those who are taught of God need no teacher, for the Holy Ghost through the Word teaches us what is true. **But as his anointing**

**teacheth you concerning all things.** It is best to regard this latter part of the verse as one sentence, changing *ye abide* into *abide ye* as in R. V. *margin*. The sentence seems to be a recapitulation of verses 20–24. (Compare John xvi. 13.) “The Spirit of truth . . . shall guide you into all the truth.” **And is true, and is no lie.** The Holy Spirit not only teaches the truth, but is absolutely the *Spirit of truth* (John xiv. 17), and where the Spirit teaches through the Word there is no lie. **And even as it taught you.** As the Spirit taught you even from the first time ye heard the Word. **Ye abide in him.** Better *abide ye* in Him, i. e. Christ.

28. **And now, my little children, abide in him.** We now have the conclusion of the whole section beginning with verse 18. John addresses all Christians as in ii. 1. He exhorts them to abide in Christ and His fellowship, which also includes the idea of His righteousness. **That, if he shall be manifested.** For there shall surely be such a manifestation of Christ. This manifestation of Christ in glory will take place at His *Parousia* (Col. iii. 4). **We may have boldness.** This refers to the confidence and joy of the believer at the time of the *Parousia* of Christ. **And not be ashamed before him** (Greek *from him*). The sharp contrast is here stated between the believer and the unbeliever. **At his coming** (*presence*). For at the time of the Second Advent the unbelievers shall draw back with shame and receive their judgment of condemnation. The word *Parousia* is found only here in St. John's writings, although it occurs often elsewhere in this sense of the *Second Coming* of Christ (Matt. xxiv. 3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19; James v. 7, 8; 2 Pet. i. 16; iii. 4; etc.).

## 12. THE CHILDREN OF GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL CONTRASTED.

29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him.

iii. 1-12. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God : and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness ; and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins ; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not : whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him. *My little children*, let no man lead you astray : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous : he that doeth sin is of the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another : not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him ? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

29. **If ye know that he is righteous.** It is difficult to decide whether John here refers to *Christ* or to *God*, for the statement is true of both and affirmed of both by John (i. 9 ; ii. 1). Most likely, however, the reference is to Christ, to whom John refers in verses 27, 28. **Ye know.** Or *know ye*, for the verb may be regarded as the indicative or the imperative. **That every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him.** It is best, in accordance with the language of John, to refer *of him* to God, and not to *Christ*. If you know that the Son of God *is righteous*, know ye that every one who does righteousness, and no

one else, is a child of God. This doing of righteousness is the practical proof that he is *born* of God, just as "walking in the light" is a practical proof that we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (i. 3, 6, 7).

## CHAPTER III.

1. **Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.** In close connection with the last verse. John calls attention to the wonderful and sublime love, which he himself had also experienced, which the Father not only had manifested, but has *given, imparted*, so that His love is now in the possession of the believers. **That we should be called children of God.** The very fact that believers are called *children of God* is the proof and result of God's love. We are not to interpret as if this referred to the future, but we are now *named, called*, children of God. BESSER: "Where God gives a name, He always gives the nature itself along with it." **And such we are.** This gives special prominence to the reality of the believer's sonship. **For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.** Because believers are children of God, the world, which is at enmity with God, does not know and understand Christians, and the reason of this lies in the fact that the world has not known God, and especially His Son Jesus Christ. The knowledge of God in Christ is the ground of all true knowledge, whether of self, or of man, or of the world. All these are wanting where this knowledge of God is wanting.

2. **Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be.** The Apostle first speaks of the present glory which belongs to the believing Christian, and then states that the future condition and

glory of the children of God is still concealed. Paul also speaks of the incomparable glory which shall be revealed in the future to the believer (Rom. viii. 18). We may, however, with Duesterdieck say, "the future glory already exists in germ and is latent in the present glory." **We know that, if he (it) shall be manifested, we shall be like him.** Most commentators interpret, *if it*, i. e. *what we shall be*, shall be manifested, we shall be like God, whose sons we are. But it is far better to interpret, *if he*, i. e. *Christ*, shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, i. e. like *Christ*, for to John, Christ and His manifestation are ever present in thought (ii. 28). This also appears from what follows,—**for we shall see him even as he is.** That is, we shall see Christ as He is, in His perfect majesty and glory. Most commentators refer this seeing to God the Father, but surely the passages quoted (Matt. v. 8; Rev. xxii. 4) refer equally to the vision of God in Christ, and it is a question whether it can be said of the Father that men shall see Him "even as He is."

3. **And every one that hath this hope set on him.** The hope of one day being like Christ. **Purifieth himself.** There must be a continued progress in sanctification, and uninterrupted self-purification on the part of the true believer. Note distinctly that John is here speaking of a regenerated and justified believer who has set his hope on Christ,—such a one, and only such, can in any way co-operate with God in his own spiritual growth, for the Holy Spirit is working in him (Phil. ii. 12, 13). **Even as he is pure.** That is, as Christ is pure from every sinful stain. The purity of Christ is the pattern of all Christians.

4. **Every one that doeth sin.** In sharp contrast to *doeth righteousness* of ii. 29. In Scripture sin is regarded under various aspects. John here uses two different

words to describe sin. When one doeth *sin* (*hamartia*), he fails and *misses* the true end and aim of his life, which is God, and **doeth also lawlessness** (*anomia*), i. e. it is also a deed of sin contrary to God's will and law. **And sin is lawlessness.** And because it is contrary to God's law, sin is imputed to man, and on account of it, he is guilty. The Apostle could not more sharply express the antithesis between the character of the believer, who is a *child of God* and *will be* like Christ, and *sin*, than by showing *sin* to be lawlessness (after HUTHER).

**5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away (bear) sins ; and in him is no sin.** Another strong reason why the believer must aim at growth in sanctification. Two things are here stated of Christ. (1) That He was manifested *to bear* our sins, not only in the sense of making atonement for them, and thus to procure their forgiveness, but also *to take away* the sins themselves, for Christ is also the active, living cause of our sanctification, working in us renovation and holiness of life. In Christ lies not only the origin of the forgiveness of sins inasmuch as His blood cleanses us from all our sins, but in Him is also and always remains the origin of the new life, in the development of which, by Christ abiding in us, the believer purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. (2) The second statement is, in Christ there is no sin, and therefore His life in us, working according to its spiritual nature and growth, must drive out all that is sinful in us. And this leads the Apostle to the following statement.

**6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.** We are not to interpret this in such a way as if it meant that the believing Christian does not sin any more at all, for John clearly teaches in i. 8-10 ; ii. 1, 2 ; iii. 3, that sin will always cling to the believer as long as he is still on earth,

and it is distinctly implied "that he therefore constantly needs both the forgiving and saving grace of God, and the intercession of Christ, as well as self-purification" (HUTHER). John here calls attention to the *possibilities* of the Christian life. In *so far* as we abide in Christ, He abides and lives in us. The new life is active and drives out sin and worketh in us only in *so far* as we abide in Christ and allow Christ and His Spirit to live and work in us. **Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth (*hath known*) him.** This does not mean, "he who still sins, as every believer daily does, is not in Christ," but "he who leads a life in sin, who walks in darkness," and who therefore has not been begotten of God (ii. 29), nor come out of the world (i. 15-17),—such a one has not *seen* Christ, with his spiritual eye of faith and become conscious of His power and glory, nor hath he *known* Him, not recognizing His glorious Person nor the work which Christ hath done for us, and still is doing for us.

**7. My little children, let no man lead you astray.** Note the tenderness and solemnity with which John warns them against being deceived by such false doctrine, as that the believer can have fellowship with sin. **He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.** No one can do righteousness unless he is begotten of God (ii. 29), and therefore has known Christ and abides in Him. By faith in Christ the believer obtains Christ's righteousness which is imputed to him, but by *doing righteousness* he also attains to *inherent righteousness*, *he is righteous*, and this is nothing more than the result of Christ's life abiding and working in him, and this righteousness is of the character, after the pattern, of Christ's righteousness, because the believer stands in real and living fellowship with Christ.



8. **He that doeth sin is of the devil.** The strongest antithesis possible to the last verse. He that doeth *righteousness* is a child of God, and is righteous,—but he that doeth *sin* is evil and a child of the devil, for sin has its origin in the devil. This truth is confirmed by what follows. **For the devil sinneth from the beginning.** As every one that doeth sin is of the devil, this implies that the devil was the cause of sin in the first man, and existed before man, and that the origin of sin is in the will of the devil. From the beginning *of sin*, ever since the devil's apostasy and fall (how soon after his creation as a good angel we know not), he has continued in his sinful opposition to God and His kingdom, and this sinning of the devil uninterruptedly continues. **To this end was the Son of God manifested.** The Apostle now proceeds to state the purpose which the Son of God had in view in becoming *incarnate* and in taking up His visible abode here on earth. **That he might destroy the works of the devil.** There is therefore a personal devil, and the object of Christ's incarnation, life, and death was to overcome and destroy the works of the devil for all believers. Scripture everywhere clearly teaches why the Son of God became man,—it is to save fallen men from sin and its condemnation. This, however, is stated in various ways. (1) He came to save sinners (1 Tim. i. 15 ; Luke xix. 10), and to redeem them which were under the law (Gal. iii. 13 ; iv. 4, 5) ; (2) to redeem us with His precious blood (1 Pet. i. 18–20), by making a propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. ii. 17 ; Rom. iii. 25 ; 1 John ii. 1, 2 ; iv. 10), giving His life as a ransom (Matt. xx. 28 ; Heb. ix. 28), and thus taking away sins (1 John i. 9 ; iii. 5), in order that He might bestow upon us eternal life (John iii. 16 ; x. 10) ; and (3) He came that He might conquer Satan by destroying his works (1 John iii. 8), and by bringing to

nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. ii. 14).

9. **Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.** Two statements are here made of true believers, and a special reason is assigned to each proposition. John here has in mind the Pauline distinction between "the old man" and "the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Eph. iv. 22-24 ; Col. iii. 9, 10). He is showing how utterly incompatible sin is to the life of the *new man* in the believer, "which is after God, created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 24). John's idea will become much clearer if we compare Rom. vii. 20, "But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me," and Gal. ii. 20, "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." There is an *absolute* antagonism between the *new man* born of God and committing sin. The *new man* cannot sin,—when the believer commits sin it is the work of "the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit" (Eph. iv. 22). It is this "old man" which believers are exhorted continually to "put away" (Eph. iv. 22). It is best to understand by *the seed of God* abiding in the believer, not so much "the word of God," but rather the Spirit of God, or probably better the germ of the new life communicated to the believer by the Spirit at the time of regeneration, "the divine element of which the *new man* is produced, and which, as the essence of his being, keeps him from sin."

10. **In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.** For the first do not live in sin, but walk in the light, while the second live in sin and walk in the darkness. The internal nature of both

can be seen by their works. **Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God.** For such a one doeth sin and therefore is of the devil (iii. 7, 8 ; ii. 29). **Neither he that loveth not his brother.** For such a one is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness (ii. 9-11), and cannot be of God, for in Him is no darkness at all (i. 5). BESSER : "Brotherly love is the essence of all righteous life."

11. **For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning.** Ever since ye heard the first preaching of the Gospel. **That we should love one another.** This is the import of the Gospel message, that Christians should love one another (ii. 10 ; see notes on 2 Peter i. 7).

12. **Not as Cain was of the evil one.** Christians are of God and therefore love one another ; they do not do as Cain did, who "hated his brother" (ii. 9-11), and was of the devil. **And slew his brother.** This was the proof that he was of the evil one. **And wherefore slew he him ? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.** Two reasons are here assigned to explain the *diabolical* character of Cain's hatred towards Abel his brother,—(1) his works were evil,—his whole manner of life,—and sin begets sin ; (2) the piety of Abel excited in Cain hatred towards his brother and towards God (Gen. iv. 4-8).

### 13. BROTHERLY LOVE AND THE HATRED OF THE WORLD CONTRASTED.

13-18. Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us : and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods,

and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? *My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.*

13. **Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you.** This brings out the sharp contrast between the world and the kingdom of God, for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James iv. 4), and the manifestation of such hatred is necessary from the very nature of the case.

14. **We know that we have passed out of death into life.** The believer is no longer in a state of spiritual death, but has entered upon the state of life, *life in Christ*, an earnest of the eternal life which he shall receive in its fulness at Christ's Second Coming. This change took place at the time of his regeneration and justification. **Because we love the brethren.** This is the sign and proof that we have eternal life. **He that loveth not abideth in death.** If we do not love the brethren this is the sign and proof that we do not have life, but are still in spiritual death. BESSER: "Where hatred is, there is death; where love is, there is life; nay, love itself is life."

15. **Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.** Not merely because hatred sometimes leads to murder, but because the essence of hatred as a moral act in the sight of God is of the same nature as murder, the latter being only an external manifestation of hatred. The reference is to Cain (verse 12). (See also Matt. v. 21-26.) **And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.** For where there is hatred there is spiritual death (ii. 14a). Only where brotherly love exists can there be life in Christ. We can already in this life obtain eternal life, but its fulness and perfection will only be ours in the life to come.

16. **Hereby know we love.** In verses 16-18 we have a description of the character or nature of true love. **Because he laid down his life for us.** In Christ's death we have the highest proof, a concrete example, of true love, for He gave His life as a ransom for us (John x. 11, 17, 18). **And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** For believers ought themselves also to walk even as He walked (ii. 6). (Compare John xv. 13; Rom. xvi. 4.)

17. **But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?** This compassion towards a needy brother is the most direct and simple way of giving evidence that we love God and have eternal life abiding in us. (See James ii. 14-17.) Where there is no such compassion shown, this is a proof that eternal life is not abiding in us.

18. **My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.** There is a sharp contrast here between an *apparent* and *hollow* love and *true* love. The two words of each clause express together one idea; a "love in word" and "with the tongue" is a hypocritical love, but a *true* love proves itself in *deed*. BENGEL contrasts the idle *word* with *deed*, and the dissembling *tongue* with *truth*.

#### 14. THE FRUIT OF LOVE.

19-24. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his command-

ments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.

**19. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth.** *Hereby*, that is, if we love in "deed and truth," *this* is evidence that we are born of the truth, and of God. **And shall assure** (*persuade*) **our heart before him.** This evidence of *brotherly love* which establishes the fact that we are born of the truth and of God, gives us also the assurance that we are children of God. The heart is here conceived of as the seat of the whole spiritual life as in James v. 8; 1 Pet. iii. 4, and as the seat of consciousness of the truth as in James i. 26. John here uses the word *heart* as including the *conscience*, for it is the conscience which excites and disquiets the heart, and which needs to be guided and pacified.

**20. Whereinsoever our heart condemn us.** The translation of this difficult verse, as given in the Revised Version, in its connection with what precedes and follows, is evidently the correct one. The whole question depends upon the translation of the first *hoti*. In *whatever* our heart condemns us (the sinfulness which still clings to the believer, for the child of God is not yet free from sin, i. 8-10),—nevertheless we still have the assurance of our forgiveness, and that we are children of God, and are of the truth. But the reason of this assurance lies not so much in our knowledge and consciousness that we "love the brethren," for such a love is always imperfect, and we can never rely for assurance on our good deeds (Luke xvii. 10), but **because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.** LUTHER correctly says: "Though conscience weigh us down, and tell us God is angry, yet God is greater than our heart. Conscience is but one drop; the reconciled God is an ocean of consolation. Conscience is always in fear, and closes its eyes;

but God is deeper and higher than thy heart, and more exactly searches the innermost parts of it." BESSER : " Our heart knows some things, and decides against us ; God knows all things, and does not decide against us, but for us, because before His eyes the seed of truth, of which we have been born, is not concealed."

21. **Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God.** If we believe that our sins are forgiven, and as the result obtain peace, then indeed do we also attain by degrees, as our faith increases, a child-like, joyful, and undisturbed confidence toward God.

22. **And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.** It is implied that the believer asks only according to the Father's will (v. 14), and the reason is here assigned why he receives an answer to his prayer. In general, we may say it is because he who prays has strong and true faith, *strong* because he asks with boldness and confidence, and *true* because he gives evidence of it by doing the will of God ALFORD: " Out of Christ, there are no good works at all ; entrance into Christ is not won or merited by them. In Christ, every work done of faith is good and is pleasing to God. The doing of such works is the working of the life of Christ in us ; they are its sign, they are its fruits ; they are not of us, but of it and of Him."

23. **And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment.** He who *believes the name* (this peculiar Greek construction only here) or *believes in* (or *on*) *the name* of Christ (v. 13), confidently and lovingly trusts in Him, loves his brother also, and therefore in the mind of the Apostle, true faith in Christ and brotherly love, in their inner nature, form

a unity. The faith of which John here speaks includes the three elements, of knowledge, assent, and confidence, and stress is here especially laid upon *confidence*. Christ specially exhorted the disciples to love one another (John xiii. 34; xv. 12, 13).

24. **And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.** Christ's own saying is the best comment, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). **And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us.** *Hereby*, that is, by the Holy Ghost who lives and works in the believer. He testifies to our spirit, and is the source of that knowledge by which we are assured that Christ and God the Father abide in us. The true believer has the assurance that he is a child of God, and as long as he abides in Christ is assured of his salvation.



## CHAPTER IV.

### 15. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR CONTRASTED.

1-6. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God : and this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh ; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world : therefore speak they *as* of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

1. **Beloved, believe not every spirit.** John now resumes his warning against the false teachers spoken of in ii. 18-28. We must draw a sharp distinction between the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the true prophet to whom the truth is revealed (2 Pet. i. 21). There is only *one* Spirit, but there may be many *spirits of men*, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness and makes revelations. So there may be also many *spirits of men* influenced by the devil, and the spirit of error. **But prove the spirits, whether they are of God.** This exhortation is given to all believers, and not to the ministry alone. The rule by which false teachers are to be tried is the Word of God. The necessity of such a trial is given by John in what follows : **because many false prophets are**

**gone out into the world.** These false prophets taught false doctrines contrary to what the Apostles had taught and John was teaching, and professed that they had received them as revelations from God. There are many such false teachers everywhere present now in the world, professing to give us new light and new revelations, but no matter by what high-sounding name or sect or ism they may be known, there is one simple test which will expose their falsity and rottenness,—the plain teaching of the Word of God.

**2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.** This is the vital point at issue. He who has a true apprehension of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and what Christ has done for him, and truly believes and confesses in word and heart Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God, has the Spirit of God abiding in him. The thought in Greek is, *which confesseth Jesus Christ having come in the flesh*, no doubt in opposition to Docetism, and possibly also to the heresy of Cerinthus. (See *Introduction*.)

**3. And every spirit which confesseth not Jesus.** That does not confess Jesus as the historical person who is Christ, and the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Some ancient authorities read *annulleth Jesus*. **Is not of God.** The spirit of such a person or teacher is influenced by the spirit of error and falsehood. **And this is the spirit of the Antichrist.** Some would supply *work* instead of *spirit*,—it matters not, the idea is the same, for it is an anti-Christian spirit. **Whereof ye have heard.** By previous oral instruction. **That it cometh.** This anti-Christian spirit. **And now it is in the world already.** *Now* already this anti-Christian spirit is working, a foreshadowing of what will occur when antichrist him-

self shall come. The coming of *the* Antichrist, "the man of sin" (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4), "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss" (Rev. xi. 7; xiii. 2-7), lies still in the future.

4. **Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them.** Believers are of God, because the Spirit of God animates them, and they have overcome and resisted these false prophets, not only inwardly in their hearts, but outwardly in the Church. **Because greater is he that is in you.** God, who gave the power to the believer to overcome. **Than he that is in the world.** Than Satan, whose children all false prophets and all who oppose Christ are.

5. **They are of the world.** These false teachers and prophets. (See ii. 19.) **Therefore speak they *as* of the world.** For it cannot be otherwise. They simply display the nature of the life that is in them. **And the world heareth them.** For the world loves to hear earthly wisdom and wisdom derived from itself.

6. **We are of God.** *We*, i. e. John and the other Apostles, and all true teachers, in contradistinction to the false teachers of the preceding verse. **He that knoweth God heareth us.** For "he that is of God heareth the words of God" (John viii. 47). **He who is not of God heareth us not.** For there is a different spirit in him, and such a one gives heed only to those who speak as of the world. **By this we know the spirit of truth.** That is, we know the Holy Spirit which teaches the truth *by this*, that the true teachers speak the words of God, and the children of God hear and give heed. **And the spirit of error.** That is, we know the spirit that emanates from the Devil, and which seduces men to falsehood and error *by this*, that the false prophets speak as of the world, and the world heareth them.

## 16. BROTHERLY LOVE IS THE ACTIVE PRINCIPLE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

7-21. Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time : if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us : hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love ; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement ; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love : but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment ; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

7. **Beloved, let us love one another.** Mutual brotherly love is the supreme duty of believers, **for love is of God.** For love proceeds from and has its origin in God. **And every one that loveth is begotten of God.** For no one can truly exercise the grace of *pure* love unless he is born of God. John is not speaking here of earthly, selfish, impure, sensual love, such as but too often is nothing else than lust. **And knoweth God.** For I cannot love until I have first won *faith* in God's love in Christ, and I cannot arrive at faith until I have attained a knowledge of God in Christ.

8. **He that loveth not knoweth not God.** The aorist tense, never *did know Him*. The reason is now given, **for God is love.** BESSER: "Love is not so much a

quality which God *has*, as rather the all-embracing total of what He *is*."

9. **Herein was the love of God manifested in us** (or, *in our case*). The expression *in us* (here and iv. 16) is peculiar. It is not the same as *unto us*, and it may define either the sphere *in which*, or the object *with regard to which*, the manifestation took place. The last interpretation, as adopted by the Revisers in the *margin*, is the best. BRAUNE: "This love is not only to us an object of contemplation, but we ourselves are objects of this love, every one of us believers has experienced it." The word *us* does not refer to mankind in general, but to believers. **That God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world.** The description of the Son as the *only begotten* is peculiar to John (John i. 14, 18; iii. 16, 18, and *here*) and marks Christ as the *only* Son of God. His pre-existence is here clearly implied. **That we might live through him.** This states the purpose why the Son of God was manifested and became incarnate. (See notes on iii. 8.) Only believers in Him can become partakers of this life.

10. **Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us.** John wishes to emphasize the fact that love has not its origin in man, but in God,—He loved us before we loved Him. **And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** In this we have the proof of His wonderful love. The emphasis lies on the words *Son* and *propitiation*. Such is the greatness of God's love to us. (See notes on ii. 2.)

11. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** How can we escape such a practical argument.

12. **No man hath beheld God at any time.** (See John i. 18, where however a different Greek verb is used.) The

thought is, God is invisible (1 Tim. vi. 16), and it is implied that no one can see Him. **If we love one another, God abideth in us.** Though God is invisible, nevertheless, if we exercise *brotherly love*, we know that God is in us, for love is of God. **And his love is perfected in us.** John is speaking of the love of God which is in us and unites us in fellowship with God. This love is to become perfected in us, that is, reach its full completion and maturity. Where this love is and grows, there brotherly love is and grows, and where brotherly love has attained its maturity, there God's love has attained its maturity in us.

13. **Hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.** Wherever the Spirit of God is and works, there God is. (See iii. 24.) The Spirit Himself is given to believers, and the Spirit also bestows gifts upon us. Nothing is said here of the gifts of the Spirit.

14. **And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.** John and the Apostles saw that the Father sent the Son with their own eyes (i. 1, 2). They themselves had experienced that He was their Saviour, and they *bore witness*, a Saviour for the whole world (ii. 2), to whom all might come and find life. Salvation has been procured for all men. Their salvation now depends on their believing on Christ as their Saviour.

15. **Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God.** That the man Jesus is also true God,—precisely what the antichrists deny (iv. 23). Jesus Christ is true man, “come in the flesh” (iv. 2), and true God. **God abideth in him, and he in God.** For he who makes this confession from his heart is of God (iv. 2), and has the Spirit of God in him (1 Cor. xii. 3).

16. **And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us** (*in our case*). In verse 14 *we* refers to the Apostles, but here it refers to *all* believers. In one sense knowledge precedes faith as *here*, for true faith is a faith which has as its elements, knowledge, assent, and confidence; in another sense faith precedes all true knowledge as in John vi. 69, for "it is only through faith that knowledge becomes the determining principle of our life, and these two elements mutually condition each other continually in the Christian life" (HUTHER). The expression "the love which God hath *in us*" must be taken in the same sense as in iv. 9, which see. **God is love.** (See notes on i. 5; iv. 8.) This is really the theme of the second main division of this Epistle (ii. 29-v. 12). **And he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.** For love is of God, and where there is such an *abiding in love* there is true fellowship with God.

17. **Herein is love made perfect with us.** John now indicates in what way the active love in which the believer abides (whether we regard it as love *to God* or love *to the brethren*, or both) shows itself as perfected in us. **That we may have boldness in the day of judgement.** He who is perfect in love has such strong faith and confidence in God and Christ, that "in the day of judgment," when Christ "shall be manifested" (ii. 28), he will stand firm and "have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his *Parousia*" (ii. 28). **Because as he is, even so are we in this world.** John here gives the reason of such boldness of confidence. If we are perfect in love, we know that we are in Christ, and that Christ is in us, and as His nature is love (iv. 16, 8), and we are like Him, we need not fear His judgment.

18. **There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear.** This verse establishes the fact that where

there is perfect love there is such a bold confidence in God, for where such love is all fear must completely vanish. **Because fear hath punishment.** In that it dreads punishment and gives evidence that he who has it is still under bondage, and has not as yet "received the spirit of adoption, whereby we say, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). **And he that feareth is not made perfect in love.** The presence of fear is a proof that the perfection of love has not been attained. Bengel calls attention to four conditions in which man may be: (1) without fear or love; (2) fear without love; (3) fear with love; (4) love without fear.

19. **We love, because he first loved us.** This is the best translation. Many would translate *let us love*. The chief emphasis rests on *first*.

20. **If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.** For he who does not love his brother, also does not love God. This is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, **for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen.** Instead of *cannot* many ancient authorities read *how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* The reason why such a person cannot love God is not simply because it is easier to love the visible than the invisible, but also because he who has no brotherly love gives evidence that he has not been begotten of God, and hence cannot truly love God (iii. 10; iv. 7, 12).

21. **And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.** John evidently has in mind the saying of Christ, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 39).



## CHAPTER V.

### 17. THE POWER AND WITNESS OF FAITH.

1-12. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God : and whosoever loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments : and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, *even* our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood : and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater : for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him : he that believeth not God hath made him a liar ; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life ; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.

1. **Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God.** John lays stress in this Epistle on several aspects of our Saviour's Person and Work. (1) Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah predicted in the O. T. (*here* and ii. 22), the Saviour of the world (ii. 2) ; (2) He is the Son of God (iv. 15 ; v. 5) ; (3) He came in the flesh (iv. 3). Only he who has been regenerated *to faith* has such a belief "in the name of His Son Jesus Christ" (iv. 23). **And whosoever loveth him that begat (God the Father) loveth him also that is begotten of him**

(his Christian brother). For he who loveth God will also love his brother.

2. **Hereby we know that we love the children of God.** The sign and evidence of this is given in what follows. **When we love God, and do his commandments.** This last includes brotherly love, and if we therefore truly love God, we know that we are also loving the brethren, because brotherly love is the necessary result of love to God.

3. **For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments : and his commandments are not grievous.** To him that is born of God the commandments of God are not grievous, "for two reasons : (1) because He gives us strength to bear them ; (2) because love makes them light " (PLÜMMER). They are a burden in so far as sin is still reigning in our mortal bodies.

4. **For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world.** For this very reason because God who is in them is greater than Satan who is in the world (iv. 4). The present tense indicates that he who is born of God is constantly gaining the victory. **And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.** The special contents of this faith which is so effective, is given in the next verse. Faith is both the victory and the victor. It is that which fights, and which from the beginning of the Gospel message has gained the victory over the world.

5. **And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?** The believer and none other gains the victory over the world. John appeals to the daily experience of his readers and hearers.

6. **This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not with (*in*) the water only, but with (*in*) the**

**water and with (*in*) the blood.** It would only be confusing to discuss the various interpretations given of this difficult passage. Three principal explanations are worthy of notice. (1) By *water and blood* John had reference to the water and blood which flowed from Christ's pierced side on the cross (John xix. 34, 35). So Augustine, many of the old Commentators, Alexander (*Speaker's Comm.*), Farrar (*Early Days*), and others. (2) That by *water and blood* are to be understood the sacraments appointed by Christ. So Sander, Besser, and others. This view is often combined with the first, as by Luther. (3) By *water* is meant the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, and by *blood* the atoning death upon the cross. So Tertullian, Neander, Brueckner, Weiss, Braune, Huther, and most moderns. Some, however, like De Wette, Gerlach, Duesterdieck, etc., refer *water* to the Sacrament of Baptism appointed by Christ. Many commentators combine the first and last view, as Bede, Westcott, and others.

Note the aorist participle,—This is *he that came*, not *he that comes*. There is a reference here to the Messianic office of Christ. Jesus the Son of God (verse 5) came as the *Christ* or the Messiah *through* (*dia*) *water*, i. e. through or by means of His baptism He entered upon His Messianic work, and through (*dia*) or by means of His *blood*, by His death on the cross He made atonement. This seems the true meaning of John's first use of the phrase *by water and blood*. But in opposition to Docetism, which indeed taught that Christ came *by water* at the baptism of Jesus, but held that Christ separated from Jesus again before His death, and therefore denied that Christ came *by blood*, John makes a more definite statement, laying stress upon the reality of the death of *Jesus Christ*. So John continues,—Jesus Christ came not *in*

the water only, at the time of His baptism, but *in the water and in the blood*, at the time the water and blood flowed from His pierced side (John ix. 34),—a proof that Christ actually died.

**7. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness.** Of the reality of Christ's death John was certain, and he bore witness of this fact (John xix. 35), and equally certain was he that Jesus was the Messiah. And as John bore witness, and his witness was true (John xix. 35), so now he also declares that the Holy Spirit *beareth witness* to these truths, especially to the fact that Jesus is the Christ. **Because the Spirit is the truth.** And we can rely on this testimony, for just as Christ is the truth (John xiv. 6), so the Spirit sent in Christ's name is the truth, and is ever applying the truth to our minds and hearts.

**8. For there are three who bear witness.** The words in the A. V. that immediately follow,—*in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth*—have rightly been omitted in the Revised Version, for these words are an interpolation first found in a late recension of the Latin Vulgate after the middle of the fifth century. They are not found in a single Greek MS. earlier than the fourteenth century, nor are they known by any of the Greek and Latin Fathers before the middle of the fifth century. Nothing is more certain in textual criticism than the fact that these words are spurious. **The Spirit, and the water, and the blood.** Notice the present tense, "there are three who *bear witness*." The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, the *water* and the *blood* are the water and blood which flowed from the pierced side of our Saviour,—and these may also be regarded as a symbol of the water with which believers are now baptized, and of the blood which is received in the Sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. **And the three agree in one.** They agree in proving Jesus to be the Messiah who made atonement for sin.

9. **If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.** And therefore we ought to receive it the more willingly. **For the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son.** And therefore we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

10. **He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him.** If we read *in him* instead of *in himself*, this witness is the Son, who abiding in us, bears witness to our spirit through the Holy Spirit which He has given to us, and which proceedeth from the Father and the Son. **He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.** (See i. 10.) This is confirmed by what follows. **Because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son.** This witness is continually given in the preaching of the Gospel.

11. **And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life.** This witness of God shows itself inwardly to the believer, in the divine life of which he becomes a partaker. By this divine life implanted in us we become partakers of eternal life, which is ours already in this life, **and this life is in his Son.**

12. **He that hath the Son hath the life.** If eternal life has its origin in the Son, and the Son Himself is the life, then it also follows that **he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.**

## 18. THE CONCLUSION.

13-21. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us : and if we know that he

heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him. If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death : not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin : and there is a sin not unto death.

We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not ; but he that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. *My* little children, guard yourselves from idols.

This last section naturally falls into four parts: (1) the aim of the Epistle restated (13); (2) confidence in prayer (14-17); (3) assurance of Christian knowledge (18-20); (4) a final warning (21).

**13. These things have I written unto you.** It is best to refer *these things* to the whole Epistle, but John may have *special* reference to the preceding section. **That ye may know that ye have eternal life.** This is the special aim of this Epistle. He aims to bring about a living consciousness of eternal life that our joy may be complete (i. 4). **Even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.** This defines the character of those to whom this letter is addressed. Only such as believe on the Son of God as the Christ and Saviour of the world can have eternal life.

**14. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.** (See notes on iii. 21, 22.) In true prayer we must sacrifice our own will to God, that He may give us His Holy Spirit. To ask God *according to His will* is to ask *in Christ's name* (John xiv. 13).

**15. And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask.** Then it follows that **we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.** For if God

hears us, then we are assured that our petitions are granted. "Since he has made God's will his own will, the believer has all he truly seeks in immediate and present possession (Mark xi. 24), though the visible fulfilment may be delayed" (WESTCOTT).

**16. If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death.** By *brother* a Christian brother is meant. John now gives us an example in how far our confidence in prayer may lead us. We are to pray for one another, even in the case of the most grievous sins, and he encourages every believer to pray for his erring brother. **He shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death.** The thought is nearly the same if we accept the translation of the margin of the R. V., *he shall ask and shall give him life even to them that sin not unto death.* For it is God who giveth true repentance and faith to the erring brother, and worketh godly sorrow, in answer to the prayer of faith here implied. **There is a sin unto death.** It is better to translate *a sin* than simply *sin*. John evidently had in mind the saying of Christ as recorded in Matt. xii. 31, 32; iii. 28, 29; Luke xii. 10, and here refers to the sin against the Holy Ghost. In Heb. vi. 4-6; x. 26, we also have reference to this same specific offence, for which no forgiveness dare be expected. **Not concerning this do I say that he should make request.** For John remembered clearly Christ's definite and explicit statement, that "whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Matt. iii. 29). The reason there can be no forgiveness is not because God is not willing to forgive, but because he who has committed this sin will not repent. "It is possible to close the heart against the influence of God's Spirit so obstinately and persistently that repentance becomes a moral impossi-

bility" (PLUMMER). Note that John does not forbid intercession even in this case, but he does not encourage it.

17. **All unrighteousness is sin.** Every breach of duty is sin, and the believer must be on his guard against every kind and form of sin, but not every sin leads to spiritual and eternal death, **and there is a sin not unto death**, of which the believer through the grace of God repents, and receives forgiveness.

18. **We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not.** In so far as we abide in Christ, and allow Christ and His Spirit to work in us, the new man lives unto God. (See notes on iii. 6, and especially iii. 9.) **But he that was begotten of God keepeth him (himself).** If we accept the reading of the text, the meaning is *it keepeth him*, i. e. the new life in God keeps him from sin. According to the margin the regenerate *keeps himself* from sin by the power and grace of God dwelling in him. **And the evil one toucheth him not.** For Satan has no power over such a one. (See notes on James iv. 7; 1 Pet. v. 8.) HUTHER: "It is true the believer is still tempted by the devil, just as sinful desires still arise in him; but being in his most inner nature redeemed from the fellowship of sin, he suffers from these temptations no injury to the life that has come to him from God."

19. **We know that we are of God.** The believer is conscious of his divine sonship. He can prove it by the work of God in himself. There is a sharp contrast between himself and the world. **And the whole world lieth in the evil one.** And is ruled over by Satan, but the evil one has no power over the regenerate who abides in Christ.

20. **And we know that the Son of God is come.** The



truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God is the thread running through this whole Epistle. **And hath given us an understanding.** The Son of God has given us the spiritual sense of knowing the truth. **That we know him that is true.** That is, the true God who sent His Son into the world. **And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.** And believers are in and have fellowship with the true God, because they *have fellowship with* and *are in* his Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God, and eternal life.** There has been much controversy concerning the exact meaning of this passage, the Arians, Socinians, Antitrinitarians, and the German Rationalists maintaining that *this* refers to the Father, while those opposed refer it to the Son, using the passage as a proof of the divinity of the Son. But although the divinity of the Son does not in any way depend on this passage, and though the dispute cannot be definitely settled on grammatical lines, it is arbitrary and contrary to John's mode of thinking, to insist that the reference is to God the Father, although this view is supported by Luecke, Neander, Gerlach, Duesterdieck, Brueckner, Hofmann, Braune, Huther, Alford, Haupt, Westcott, and others. It is best with Bengel, Sander, Besser, Ebrard, Weiss, Liddon, Alexander, Wordsworth, and others, to refer *this* to the Son, who is "the very God, and eternal life."

21. *My little children, guard yourselves from idols.* A most impressive conclusion and exhortation on account of its brevity. This warning is evidently directed both against literal idolatry, with which the believers of the first centuries were everywhere surrounded, as well as against spiritual idolatry, the false mental ideas and images of God which the false teachers made for themselves of God. The true God alone was to be the object

of worship. An *idol* is anything which, in our heart, takes the place of God.

COLLECT.

O Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy Church and Household continually in Thy true religion ; that they who do lean only upon the hope of Thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by Thy mighty power ; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*



# SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

## TO THE

### SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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I. *The Author of the Epistle.* There is no reason why we should question the Apostolic authorship of this Epistle, because the Apostle John, in this and in his third Epistle, like Peter (1 Pet. v. 1), describes himself as an "elder" or "presbyter." He evidently uses this title from a spirit of modesty and humility, instead of the title *Apostle*, to describe his age and his official position. Those who hold that another John, known as "John, the Presbyter," wrote these two Epistles (as maintained by Fritzsche, Bretschneider, Wieseler, Credner, Ebrard, and others) have very little foundation for their theory, for it is an open question whether such a "John, the Presbyter," other than John the Apostle, ever had *an historical existence*.<sup>1</sup>

The external evidence in favor of the Apostle John being the author is greater than we might expect in the case of an Epistle written to a private person, and so little known in the Early Church. The reference in the Mura-

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot, Westcott, Huther, and others are willing to admit that such a person lived at Ephesus about this time, while others, like Plummer, Salmon, Farrar, and Riggensbach, hold that we cannot even prove the historical existence of such a person.

torian Canon (170 A. D.) to "two Epistles of John," no matter how interpreted, proves at least that John was supposed to have written more than one Epistle. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, Clement of Alexandria and the Alexandrian school in general (200–300 A. D.), as well as Dionysius of Alexandria,—those witnesses who are nearest to St. John in time,—all agree in ascribing the Second Epistle to John, and seem to know no other view. Origen knows the two shorter Epistles of John, but states that not all in his time admitted that they were genuine. After the time of Eusebius the two Epistles were universally acknowledged as a part of the Sacred Canon.

The internal evidence that this Epistle was written by the Apostle John is equally strong. (1) No possible motive, on account of its brevity, can be assigned for its forgery. A forger would have written a longer letter. (2) The very designation of John as "the elder" is a mark of its genuineness, for a forger would have written, "John the Apostle." (3) The writer of the First Epistle of John is also the writer of the Second Epistle, because there is a most remarkable resemblance between the two, no less than eight of the thirteen verses of the Second Epistle having their parallels in the First Epistle.

2. *The Person Addressed.* The Epistle is addressed "unto the elect lady and her children." Some maintain that by this is meant some local church, as in 1 Pet. v. 13. According to this view the salutation in verse 13 is a greeting sent to one church from another. Although some great names favor such an interpretation (Calovius, Hofmann, Huther, Wieseler, Bishop Lightfoot, Weiss, Wordsworth, Salmon, and others), this is altogether too mystical. The whole narrative portion of the Epistle is against it (verses 4, 5, 12, 13). The Epistle is of the

same character as the third Epistle, and that is also addressed to an individual (3 John 1).

The question now arises, how shall we translate *eklekta kuria*? Is *Electa* the name of the lady, or is it *Kyria*, or are both descriptive names as in the Authorized and Revised Versions? It is mere conjecture to maintain (Cappellus, Wetstein, Grotius, Bishop Middleton) that this letter was addressed to "Electa, the lady, and her children," and it is also grammatically untenable; nor can much be said in favor of the translation, "to the elect Kyria and her children," although this has been advocated by Athanasius, Bengel, De Wette, Guericke, Credner, Neander, Brueckner, Duesterdieck, Ebrard, Blunt, Davidson, Alford, Luecke, Cox, Bishop Alexander, and others. It is probably best to translate "unto the elect lady and her children," as in the Revised Version. So also Luther, Braune, Farrar, Plummer, Sadler, Gloag, and others.

3. *The Time and Place of Writing.* It is highly probable that the Epistle was written at Ephesus, at about the same time as the First Epistle. In all probability "the elect lady" lived near Ephesus, at least within the district over which John had oversight, while at Ephesus.

4. *The Design and Contents of the Epistle.* This Epistle shows the Apostle John to us as the shepherd of individual souls. In it we have a glimpse of the everyday life of the Christian home. We may analyze the letter as follows:

## I. INTRODUCTION.

### 1. Address and greeting (1-3).

## II. BODY OF THE EPISTLE.

### 2. Occasion of the letter (4).

### 3. Exhortation to love and obedience (5, 6).

4. Warning against false doctrine (7-9).
5. Warnings against false hospitality (10, 11).

### III. CONCLUSION.

6. Final greetings (12, 13).

IV. Literature. In addition to the literature given on the Epistle in general, and on 1 John, we would recommend Cox, *The Private Letters of St. Paul and St. John*, 1867.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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### I. ADDRESS AND GREETING.

1-3. The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth ; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth ; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever : Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

1. **The elder.** The Apostle John in his modesty styles himself *the elder* instead of *the Apostle*, not only on account of his age, but also on account of his official position (1 Pet. v. 1). **Unto the elect lady and her children.** The letter is evidently written to an individual, but we do not know who this lady was, or where she lived. We have no evidence that her name was either *Electa* or *Kyria* (See *Introduction*.) Those who interpret *Kyria* (*lady*) as meaning a particular church, maintain that *children* refers to the members of the church, but there is no foundation whatever for such a mystical interpretation. John calls the lady *elect*, because she is a believer. (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 1, 2.) **Whom I love.** It is best to refer *whom* to both mother and children. As the pronoun is masculine we may infer that the woman had more sons than daughters. As *I* is emphatic, this serves to bring out the personal relation of the Apostle to this Christian family. **In truth.** This love is not only *true*, but it is real *Christian* love. **And not I only, but also all they that know the truth.** All believers who know this lady and her children have such genuine Christian love toward them.



2. **For the truth's sake which abideth in us.** The real reason of this love lies in the fact that the truth as revealed in Christ is in the possession of those who are loved and of those who love. **And it shall be with us for ever.** The truth as revealed in Christ shall always remain as objective truth, and they shall always remain in fellowship with it.

3. **Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.** (Compare 1 Tim. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 2.) This is at once a wish and a declaration. On *grace* and *peace* see notes on 1 Pet. i. 2; on *mercy*, 1 Pet. i. 3. *Grace* has reference to the sins of men, *mercy* to their misery. BENGEL: "*Grace* removes guilt; *mercy*, unhappiness; and *peace* implies continuance in grace and mercy." John lays special stress on the sonship of Christ. **In truth and love.** For he who abides in these becomes a partaker of grace, mercy, and peace.

## 2. OCCASION OF THE LETTER.

4. I rejoice greatly that I have found *certain* of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.

4. **I rejoice greatly that I have found *certain* of thy children walking in truth.** We may infer that John had met some of these children somewhere, possibly in Ephesus, or in a neighboring town, most likely in the house of their maternal aunt (verse 13), and those whom he had found were faithful Christians. **Even as we received commandment from the Father,** through the Son, that we should walk in the truth.

## 3. EXHORTATION TO LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.

5. 6. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love

one another. And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.

5. **And now.** Since I rejoice that some of thy children are leading a Christian life. The connection with verse 4 is not temporal but logical. **I beseech thee, lady.** For John seems to have some anxiety about some of the children of the lady, who were in danger from deceivers. **Not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning.** (See notes on 1 John ii. 7.) **That we love one another.** (See 1 John iii. 11.)

6. **And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments.** (See notes on 1 John v. 3.) **This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.** (See notes on 1 John ii. 24 ; iii. 11.) The keeping of God's commandments consists in loving God and loving our brother. Love is the best safeguard against error.

#### 4. WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE.

7-9. For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, *even* they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God : he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.

7. **For many deceivers.** So called because these false teachers seek to lead believers astray (1 John ii. 26 ; iv. 1). **Are gone forth into the world.** (Compare 1 John iv. 1.) **Even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh.** (See notes on 1 John iv. 2, 3.) **This is the deceiver and the antichrist.** The antichrist of whom they have heard. (See notes on 1 John ii. 18, 22 ; iv. 3.)

8. **Look to yourselves.** An earnest exhortation to guard against these false teachers. **That ye lose** (or *destroy*) **not the things which we have wrought.** Whether we read *we* or *ye have wrought*, as some ancient authorities do, the thought remains essentially the same. By giving ear to false teachers we may endanger the very blessings of which we have become partakers through the preaching of the Gospel. **But that ye receive a full reward.** By remaining faithful, they would in this life continue partakers of peace and joy, and in the life to come, receive their *full reward*, even eternal life. Believers receive either a full reward or none at all, nevertheless there are different degrees of glory.

9. **Whosoever goeth onward** (or *taketh the lead*). That is, following the spirit of these false teachers in seeking what they call a higher knowledge, advances beyond the limits of Christian doctrine (*advanced* thinkers). **And abideth not in the teaching of Christ**, in His word, and in the truth which was taught by Him and through His Apostles, **hath not God.** For such a one denieth the Son, and therefore hath not the Father (1 John ii. 23). This is expressed more clearly by what follows : **He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.** For such a one hath the Son, and he who hath the Son, hath the Father also.

##### 5. WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE HOSPITALITY.

10, 11. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting : for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.

10. **If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching.** If he cometh as a brother or teacher, and is

not a true believer, holding the doctrine of Christ, **receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting.** A warning against fellowship with false teachers. Believers are not to receive hospitably into their houses such as oppose the doctrine of Christ, nor are they to give them friendly greetings.

**11. For he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.** For such a greeting is not merely an outward display of politeness, but implies an intimate relation of fellowship, and that we have sympathy with false doctrine, and with the antichristian spirit. We are not only in danger of being led astray ourselves, but by our example we injure the cause of truth, of Christ, of His Church, and of God.

## 6. FINAL GREETINGS.

**12, 13.** Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

**12. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink.** The paper which John used evidently was papyrus, the finer kind used for letters. John had many things to say, not only on this subject of fellowship with false teachers, but on more joyful topics, and now he states why he does not write more fully at this time. **But I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face.** Then he will in oral intercourse discuss all these things, and especially speak of the true fellowship which is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 3, 4), **that your joy may be fulfilled.** (See 1 John i. 4.)

**13. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.** The children of the sister of the person to whom John

was writing were evidently living in Ephesus, and it is highly probable that John was staying with them in their home, at the time he wrote this Epistle.

COLLECT.

O God, who restorest to the right way them that err, Who gatherest them that are scattered, and preservest them that are gathered : Of Thy tender mercy, we beseech Thee, pour upon Thy Christian people the grace of Unity, that, all schisms being healed, Thy flock, united to the True Shepherd of Thy Church, may worthily serve Thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

# SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

TO THE

## THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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1. *The Authorship and Authenticity of the Epistle.* The common authorship of what are known as the Second and Third Epistles of John has been universally admitted. The resemblance between them as to form and contents is so close that both must stand or fall together. The reason we have so little external evidence in favor of this Third Epistle is owing to its brevity, and the private character of its contents. It is however recognized by Dionysius of Alexandria, and mentioned by Origen and Eusebius, and after the time of Eusebius was accepted as a part of the Canon. But the internal evidence is very strong. No possible motive can be adduced for its forgery, and what has been said of the Second Epistle may equally be affirmed of this.

2. *The Person Addressed.* Of "Gaius the beloved," the person to whom John writes, we know nothing save what this letter informs us. It is highly probable that there are at least three persons of the name of Gaius, mentioned in the New Testament: (1) Gaius of Corinth, in whose house Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans (Rom. xvi. 23), probably the same as the one mentioned

in 1 Cor. i. 14; (2) Gaius of Macedonia (Acts xix. 29); and (3) Gaius of Derbe (Acts xx. 4, 5). It is possible, but nothing more, that the Gaius of our Epistle may be one of these. From the Epistle we learn that Gaius was a believer (verse 2), greatly beloved (verse 1), leading a model Christian life (verses 3, 4), noted for his hospitality to Christian strangers (verses 5-7), possibly some well-to-do layman (verse 6), and a prominent member of some local church (verse 9).

3. *The Aim of the Epistle.* From a careful study of this Epistle it seems that John had written to this church of which Gaius was a member, a letter, which now has been lost, in which he probably recommended certain travelling brethren (verses 9, 10), whom the proud and overbearing Diotrephes would not receive, but who it seems were hospitably entertained by Gaius. John hearing this writes this letter to Gaius commending him for his Christian hospitality (verses 5-8), sending it as it seems by the hands of the faithful Demetrius. "In these two short occasional letters St. John provided two safeguards for the Christian Church. Heresy and schism are the dangers to which it is perpetually exposed. St. John's condemnation of the spirit of *heresy* is recorded in the Second Epistle; his condemnation of the spirit of *schism* in the Third Epistle" (ALEXANDER).

4. *Time and Place of Writing.* The Epistle was evidently written toward the close of John's life, soon after his other two Epistles, while he was exercising his oversight over the churches during his residence at Ephesus. The journeys referred to in his Second and Third Epistles were evidently connected with his official oversight over the Churches of Asia Minor.

5. *Contents of the Epistle.* The contents can best be ascertained by a careful analysis:

- I. INTRODUCTION.
  - 1. Address (1).
- II. BODY OF THE EPISTLE.
  - 2. Personal Good Wishes (2-4).
  - 3. Gaius Commended for his Hospitality (5-8).
  - 4. Diotrephes Condemned (9, 10).
  - 5. Exhortation (11).
  - 6. Demetrius Commended (12).
- III. CONCLUSION.
  - 7. Final Greetings (13, 14).





## THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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### I. ADDRESS.

1. The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth.

1. **The elder** (See 2 John 1.) **Unto Gaius the beloved.** Of Gaius nothing is known beyond what is said in this Epistle. (See *Introduction*.) **Whom I love in truth.** (See 2 John 1.)

### 2. PERSONAL GOOD WISHES.

2-4. Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

2. **Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health.** The Epistle begins with a wish and a prayer to God for the welfare of Gaius in all *external* circumstances, and special stress is laid on his health. We need not infer from this, however, that Gaius had been sick, or was in delicate health. **Even as thy soul prospereth.** This implies that Gaius had fellowship with Christ and the Father, and was leading a most exemplary Christian life. A man's spiritual prosperity is known by his works.

3. **For I rejoiced (or rejoice) greatly, when brethren came and bare witness (or come and bear witness) unto**

**thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth.** The reason of the Apostle's joy is here stated. Travelling brethren have repeatedly brought tidings of the beautiful Christian life which Gaius was leading,—not only in his making a true profession of faith against all false doctrine, but especially in his adorning his confession with a true and exemplary Christian life.

4. **Greater joy have I none than this** (or, *these things*) **to hear** (or, *that I may hear*) **of my children walking in the truth.** Some ancient authorities read *grace* instead of *joy*. Nothing can give greater joy to the Apostle than to hear that the members of the churches (*my children*) over which he has oversight, are leading, both inwardly and outwardly, a truly Christian life.

### 3. GAIUS COMMENDED FOR HIS HOSPITALITY.

5-8. Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal ; who bare witness to thy love before the church : whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God : because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth.

5. **Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal.** John praises Gaius for his hospitality which he displayed to the travelling brethren,—whether these were evangelists or not we cannot decide. What makes this hospitality especially praiseworthy was the fact that these brethren were personally unknown to Gaius. This is very tersely expressed in Greek, which may be translated, *brethren and that too strangers*.

6. **Who bear witness to thy love before the church.** These travelling brethren gave their witness in the presence of the church where John was at the time of his writing. **Whom thou wilt do well to set forward on**

**their journey.** All such travelling brethren. It is not necessary to insist that *whom* refers to certain particular brethren who had just come from Gaius, and were returning to him again. **Worthily of God.** In a manner worthy of God, whose servants they and you are, with all care and love (LUECKE).

7. **Because that for the sake of the Name they went forth.** For they have gone forth as evangelists or missionaries, for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ, to preach His Gospel as the Messiah and the Saviour of the world. **Taking nothing of the Gentiles.** And therefore they need so much the more the assistance of the brethren in all the churches. These missionaries would not receive any support from the heathen, "because they did not want to build up Christ's work by the wealth of the heathen" (HUTHER).

8. **We therefore ought to welcome such,** and entertain them hospitably in our Christian homes, **that we may be fellow-workers with the truth.** What a glorious incentive to be active in the work of Inner, Home, and Foreign Missions. Although not directly engaged in Christian work, we may, by our gifts, become the assistants and fellow-workers of the missionaries, and thus do much for the spread of the kingdom of God.

#### 4. DIOTREPES CONDEMNED.

9, 10. I wrote somewhat unto the church : but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth *them* out of the church.

9. **I wrote somewhat unto the church.** To the church to which Gaius belonged. This letter (now lost)

probably was a recommendation to the travelling missionaries, whom Diotrephes would not receive, and it may be that he even withheld the letter. **But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.** This is all we know of Diotrephes. We cannot determine whether he was simply a prominent layman, a deacon, or a presbyter,—most likely he had an office in the local congregation. The Apostle regards this action on the part of Diotrephes as a rejection of himself.

**10. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth.** John expects soon to visit this church and personally oppose the intrigues of Diotrephes. **Prating against us with wicked words.** This shows the bitter spirit which actuated Diotrephes, *chattering, talking nonsense.* **And not content therewith.** For he injured also the brethren. **Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would.** For there were some in the church who were willing to entertain the missionaries, in opposition to Diotrephes. **He forbiddeth, and casteth them out of the church.** It seems that Diotrephes, in his arrogance, went even so far as unjustly to expel from the church those who opposed his will.

## 5. EXHORTATION.

**11. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God : he that doeth evil hath not seen God.**

**11. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil.** As illustrated in the case of Diotrephes. **But that which is good.** As seen in the Christian conduct of Demetrius (verse 12). John applies the moral in the form of an exhortation. **He that doeth good is of God.** Such a one is born of God, and has the source of his life in

God. **He that doeth evil hath not seen God.** (See 1 John iii. 6.)

#### 6. DEMETRIUS COMMENDED.

12. Demetrius hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself : yea, we also bear witness ; and thou knowest that our witness is true.

12. **Demetrius hath the witness of all men.** Demetrius was probably the bearer of this letter to Gaius, and had a good report among all the Christians who knew him. **And of the truth itself.** Truth is here personified. A difficult passage. Probably it is best to explain by 1 John v. 7, regarding *truth* as equal to the *Spirit of truth*, a description of the Holy Ghost. This good report of the conduct of Demetrius was not mere human testimony, but it was also that of the Spirit of truth, which was in them. Others would refer *truth* to "the objective truth of God, which is the divine rule of the walk of all believers" (ALFORD). Demetrius walked according to this rule, and thus the rule bore witness to his Christian life. **Yea, we also bear witness ; and thou knowest that our witness is true.** John now also adds his own personal testimony, which would have the greatest weight with Gaius.

#### 7. CONCLUSION.

13, 14. I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen : but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.

13. **I had many things to write unto thee.** The thought is, I should have much to write in this letter, **but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen.** In 2 John 12 the expression is *with paper and ink*.

14. **But I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak**

**face to face.** This is the reason why he does not deem it necessary to write a longer letter. Oral intercourse is more satisfactory. **Peace be unto thee.** (See notes on 1 Pet. v. 14.) *Pax interna conscientiae, Pax fraterna amicitiae, Pax superna gloriae.* "The internal peace of conscience, the fraternal peace of friendship, and the heavenly peace of glory." **The friends salute thee.** John sends greetings from the special friends of Gaius. The expression suits a purely private Epistle. **Salute the friends by name.** The salutation is to each individual separately, to the special friends of St. John.

COLLECT.

Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household, the Church, in continual godliness ; that through Thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve Thee in good works, to the glory of Thy Name ; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.  
*Amen.*

## SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

TO THE

### GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

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1. *The Author of the Epistle.* The writer describes himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (verse 1). Some suppose that this Judas was the Judas *of James* mentioned in the list of the twelve Apostles (Luke vi. 16; Acts i. 13), who was also known as Thaddæus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18).<sup>1</sup> But the correct translation of Judas *of James* cannot be *the brother of James*, it must be *the son of James*, as in the text of the Revised Version. The James of whom Judas was a brother (Jude 1) can be no other than the distinguished James, the Head of the church at Jerusalem, and this James as we have already shown<sup>2</sup> was not one of the twelve, but the brother of our Lord, a son of Joseph and Mary.<sup>3</sup> Judas, or Jude, the author of the Epistle, was therefore a brother of our Lord (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3). This view was already held by Clement of Alex-

<sup>1</sup> So already Tertullian and Origen, and this view is defended in modern times by Schneckenburger, Hofmann, Winer, Tregelles, Wordsworth, Lange, Keil, and others.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction to the Epistle of James.

<sup>3</sup> On his real relationship to Jesus see pp. 2-5.



andria, and in modern times has been adopted by Bleek, Credner, Brueckner, Wiesinger, Spitta, Alford, Farrar, Lumby, Plummer, Gloag, Salmon, and others. There is no writer in the New Testament of whose life and character we know so little. A younger brother of our Lord, Jude did not believe on Him until after Christ's resurrection (John vii. 5), converted possibly by His appearance to James (1 Cor. xv. 7), or at the manifestation of Christ to five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. xv. 6). The traditional accounts of Jude are very uncertain. The interesting story told by Hegesippus, preserved by Eusebius (III. 18-20), that two grandchildren of Jude who "after the flesh was called the brother of the Lord" were accused and brought before Domitian, agrees with the statement of Paul that the brethren of our Lord were married (1 Cor. ix. 5).

2. *The Authenticity of the Epistle.* The external evidence is greater than might be expected in the case of so short an Epistle. The first mention of it is in the Muratorian Canon (170 A. D.), and Clement of Alexandria (190 A. D.) directly refers to it by name in several of his works; Tertullian quotes it (about 210 A. D.), and Origen a few years later speaks of Jude as having written an Epistle "of few lines indeed, but full of mighty words of heavenly wisdom." And though Eusebius (325 A. D.) places it among the books spoken against, he remarks that it was "well known and widely acknowledged." After the time of Eusebius the Epistle of Jude was universally accepted as genuine and acknowledged as canonical.

Two objections, drawn from internal evidence, have been made against its genuineness and authenticity. The Tuebingen School represented by Baur, Schwelger, Holtzmann, Lipsius, and others, maintain that from verse 17,

“remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles,” we may infer that this Epistle belongs to post-Apostolic times. But all that we can infer from this passage is (1) that the writer here distinguishes himself from the Apostles, and (2) that he takes it for granted that his readers had heard the preaching of some of the Apostles. Another objection made against the genuineness of this Epistle by some is, that there are too many apocryphal and legendary references in this Epistle, more, indeed, than in all the writings of the N. T. put together, and that such apocryphal references are inconsistent with the idea of inspiration. But the question arises, Are these references to apocryphal legends or to Jewish traditions? May not the Apocryphal Books, which some maintain that Jude used, like “The Assumption of Moses” and “The Book of Enoch,” as well as the statements of Jude, be based upon the same Jewish traditions? It is highly probable that Jude, in referring to the contention of Michael with the devil concerning the body of Moses and to the prophecy of Enoch, alludes to certain true facts, handed down by Jewish tradition, well known and accepted, but not recorded in the Old Testament. This ought not to surprise us, for Paul also gives us some facts in the history of Moses, not recorded in the Book of Exodus (2 Tim. iii. 8). Because Jude refers to these events, it does not follow that he quotes from the two apocryphal books already mentioned, which may already have existed in the time of Christ, although even this is questioned by some.<sup>1</sup> These references, no matter what the true solution may be, at least, furnish no objection to the genuineness of this Epistle, and the book has been accepted as genuine by such eminent writers as Bleek,

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Commentary.

De Wette,<sup>1</sup> Wiesinger, Huther, Fronmueller, Keil, Alford, Farrar, Salmon, Gloag, Wordsworth, Lumby, Plummer, Plumptre, and others.

3. *The Persons Addressed.* A careful study of the Epistle shows that the letter is evidently addressed to Christian Jews who are familiar with Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish traditions. As the allusions are all Jewish, some have thought that the Epistle must have been addressed to some church or churches in Palestine, or to some particular district of the Diaspora, in which nearly all the church members were converted Jews. But this question cannot be positively decided.

4. *The Aim of the Epistle.* The immediate design of the Epistle is stated in verses 3 and 4 to be the confirmation of believers in the faith, and the encouragement of them to stand up for the faith in opposition to ungodly men, who by their immoral lives and false teaching were seeking to corrupt the Church.

5. *Relation of the Epistle of Jude to 2 Peter.* A careful comparison of the two Epistles seems to establish the fact that 2 Peter was written first. Peter speaks prophetically of the false teachers who shall privily bring in heresies. The future aspect of these coming heresies seems most strongly emphasized (2 Pet. ii. 1-3; iii. 1-4). Jude, on the other hand, refers to these false teachers as already present, and describes their teaching and its effects (Jude 4, 12, 17, 18). If we look at the characters portrayed in the two Epistles, the view that this Epistle was written the later of the two receives additional confirmation. For in this Epistle of Jude the picture has become much darker,

<sup>1</sup> De Wette, who by no means can be regarded as conservative, says: "No important objection to the genuineness of this Epistle can be made good. . . . The Epistle is the less open to suspicion, as the author does not distinctly claim to be an Apostle, nor can a pretext for forgery be discerned."

his illustrations are even stronger and bolder than those of Peter, for the times were grown more evil, and the results of these licentious practices and heretical doctrines were already seen (Jude 4, 8, 12, 16, 19). On account of the remarkable resemblance between 2 Pet. ii. 1—iii. 3 and Jude 4–18, some have maintained that Jude must have made use of 2 Peter, while still others advocate the theory that Peter wrote later than Jude, and made use of his Epistle. But although there is such a great resemblance, the points of difference are so great, that it is highly probable that Peter and Jude wrote independently of each other.<sup>1</sup>

6. *Time and Place of Writing.* The relation of this Epistle to 2 Peter determines its date. If we accept the view, which is most probable, that it was written after 2 Peter, then it must have been composed after 64 A. D., the most probable date of Peter's martyrdom. It is also clear from internal evidence that the Epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., for if Jude had written later, he would not have omitted reference to this fearful example of divine judgment. We may therefore conclude that the Epistle was written between 65 and 68 A. D.

We have no means for deciding the place of composition. Most commentators favor Palestine, and on account of the Jewish tone of the Epistle, even Jerusalem itself has been suggested.

7. *The Contents of the Epistle.* The contents and arrangement of the Epistle can best be shown by the following analysis:

## I. INTRODUCTION.

### 1. Address and Salutation (1, 2).

<sup>1</sup> See a full discussion of this subject in Special Introduction to 2 Peter.

## II. BODY OF THE EPISTLE.

2. Reason for Writing (3, 4).
3. Three Examples of the Punitive Justice of God (5-7).
4. Description of the Sin of these False Teachers (8-16).
5. Final Exhortations to his Readers (17-23).

## III. CONCLUSION.

6. Doxology (24, 25).

8. *Select Literature.* In addition to the Literature given on the General Epistles, and on 1 and 2 Peter, we will call attention to

Gardiner, *Commentary on the Epistle of Jude*, 1856.  
Hofmann, *Die Briefe Petri, Judä, und Jakobi*, 1876.  
Philippi, F., *Das Buch Henoch, etc.*, Stuttgart, 1868.  
Schodde, *The Book of Enoch*, Andover, 1882.

## THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

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### I. ADDRESS AND SALUTATION.

1, 2. Judas, a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ : Mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

1. **Judas.** The same as Jude. Not Judas Iscariot, nor Judas the son of James, who was also called Thaddæus (Matt. x. 3 ; Mark iii. 18), but a younger brother of our Lord, a son of Joseph and Mary. (See *Introduction*.) **A servant** (*bondservant*) **of Jesus Christ.** (See notes on James i. 1 ; 2 Pet. i. 1.) **And brother of James.** Of that James who was the brother of our Lord, who wrote the Epistle that bears his name, and who was at the head of the church at Jerusalem. It was no doubt for modesty's sake that Jude does not call himself "a brother of the Lord," and by describing himself as "a brother of James," his readers knew who it was that wrote the letter, for it is very likely that it was destined for the same Jewish Christian churches to whom James had written some twenty years before. **To them that are called.** This describes the readers of this Epistle as not only having heard the Gospel, but as having received it and become true believers in Christ. The word *called* is the principal word in the sentence, the literal translation being, *to them that are beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ, being called.* **Beloved in God the Father.** We must read *beloved* instead of *sanctified* as in A. V. We

are not to interpret *beloved by* God, but the believers are the objects of the writer's love, *in God* who is *the Father* of Jesus Christ. **And kept for Jesus Christ.** In order to be His forever. Jude conceives his readers to have been preserved from falling away from Christ up to that very time. WORDSWORTH: "The evil angels are *preserved* or *kept* for judgment (2 Pet. ii. 4); the heavens are preserved or *kept* for fire (2 Pet. iii. 7); but ye are preserved and *kept* for Jesus Christ, and there is an everlasting inheritance preserved or *kept* in heaven for you (1 Pet. i. 4)."

2. **Mercy unto you.** Mercy is God's grace as displayed towards the miserable. (See 2 John 3.) **And peace and love be multiplied.** (See notes on 1 Pet. i. 2.) Peace is the condition which follows the acceptance of the grace of God. It is best to refer *love* to the love of God as manifested to believers, rather than to *active* love on the part of the believer.

## 2. REASON FOR WRITING.

3, 4. Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, *even* they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

3. **Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you.** This states on what subject Jude had been anxious to write when the appearance of certain ungodly men (verse 4), inwardly constrained him to write such an exhortative Epistle as the present. **To contend earnestly for the faith.** BENDEL: "Our duty is twofold, to fight vigorously for the faith against

its foes, and to build ourselves up in the faith (verse 20).” By *faith* is here meant that which is believed by Christians, the objective contents of faith. **Which was once for all delivered unto the saints.** By the preaching of the Apostles. *Once for all* makes emphatic the fact that no other faith or Gospel will be given (Gal. i. 7, 8). Every doctrine which can be shown that it is not in God’s Word is *new*, and anything *new* which is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God is *false*.

4. **For there are certain men crept in privily.** On this verse compare notes on 2 Pet. ii. 1–3. In Peter we have a prophecy that such ungodly men shall arise, and here we have already its fulfilment. We need not insist that these false teachers purposely crept in from without, but stress is laid on the fact that they ought not to belong to the Church, because their views and teaching are utterly opposed to the truths of the Gospel. *Even they who were of old set forth unto this condemnation.* So notorious is the wickedness of these men, that Jude sees their punishment as most certain, and as having long since been described in the Word of God. Some think the reference is to the warnings given in the Epistles of Paul and 2 Peter, but it is best to include also the prophecies and types of the Old Testament. WORDSWORTH: “The doom which they would incur had been set forth *beforehand* and visibly displayed in the punishment of the Israelites (verse 5), and in that of the rebel angels (verse 6), and had been graven indelibly in letters of fire on the soil of Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 7). Since God is unchangeably just and holy, all who sin after the manner of those who have been thus punished, must look for like punishment to theirs.” **Ungodly men.** In what two forms this ungodliness manifested itself is specially brought out in what follows.



**Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.** Instead of using the grace of God offered to them in the Gospel and in baptism, as an incentive to holiness, they use their Christian liberty for an occasion to the flesh (Gal. v. 13), as a cloke of maliciousness and wantonness (1 Pet. ii. 16; Jude 19). **And denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.** It is best to regard *our only Master* a designation given to Christ. (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 1.) Some as in the margin of the R. V. wrongly refer it to God the Father, translating *denying the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ*. This denial of Christ was both doctrinal and practical, although it is most likely that Jude had in mind especially their *practical* denial of Christ.

### 3. THREE EXAMPLES OF THE PUNITIVE JUSTICE OF GOD.

5-7. Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, how that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication, and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.

**5. Now I desire to put you in remembrance.** (Compare 2 Pet. i. 12.) **Though you know all things once for all.** For everything that pertains to your salvation has been taught you, and you need no new instruction. **How that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt.** By *the Lord* is meant God, and it was the people of Israel that the Lord saved at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. If we accept the reading *Jesus* as many very ancient authorities read, then "Jude here

would speak from the same point of view as Paul does in 1 Cor. x. 4 (see also 1 Pet. i. 11), according to which all the acts of divine revelation are done by the instrumentality of Christ, as the eternal Son and revealer of God" (HUTHER). **Afterward destroyed them that believed not.** Instead of *afterward* the Greek is *the second time*. The reference is to what befell the unbelieving in the wilderness after the deliverance from Egypt. WORDSWORTH: "The *first* thing that God did was to *deliver* them; the *second* thing was to *destroy* them. So soon did destruction follow deliverance, even of His own people. Let this be a warning to these false teachers, and to you." In the parallel passage in 2 Pet. ii. 5, instead of this example, the deluge is named.

6. **And angels which kept not their own principality.** The second example is taken from the angelic world. (See notes on the parallel passage 2 Pet. ii. 4.) The reference is to the fall of Satan and his angels at the beginning (John viii. 44; Matt. xxv. 41). They kept not their original condition of innocence and holiness, and the dominion which originally belonged to them, but **left their proper habitation**. This habitation was the glorious dwelling-place assigned to them by their Creator. Instead of administering their duties as angels of God, they forsook their heavenly abode, by their own voluntary act of sin, being seduced by their Prince and Leader, who was Satan himself. The fall of the angels is here declared to be due to their own deliberate will and act. The cause of Satan's fall was pride (1 Tim. iii. 6), and no doubt this also was the impelling cause of the fall of these evil angels. **He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.** This keeping is a reservation unto the punishment in store for them on the day of judgment. The mode of

retention is more precisely defined by the two statements,—(1) *in everlasting bonds*, for these chains are eternal, and cannot be broken; and (2) *under darkness*, for their real place to which they rightly belong is in the lowest part of Hades, in the fore-hell, where they are committed “to pits of darkness” (2 Pet. ii. 4). Because of the statement in Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12; 2 Cor. iv. 4, many of the Early Fathers maintained that Satan and his evil angels have now their abode in the darkness of the air near this earth of ours,—but of this we have no proof. They may well be said to be *chained*, because they are forever restrained from recovering the glory and happiness which they once possessed. The chains of darkness of which Peter and Jude speak, and to which Satan and his angels are confined and kept unto the day of judgment, “are of such power as to restrain them from ever recovering their place in the regions of light, but not such as to prevent them from exercising great power over sinful persons in this world. . . . And though their chain now permits them to visit this earth, yet they always carry that chain with them, and are restrained from injuring God’s servants” (WORDSWORTH).

**7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah.** This is the third example of judgment. (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 6.) **And the cities about them.** Admah and Zeboiim (Deut. xxix. 23). **Having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication.** *With these* evidently refers to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The thought is the inhabitants of these *four* cities of the plain were all guilty of the same abominable crime narrated in Gen. xix. To refer *with these* to the *angels* spoken of in verse 6 is utterly unwarranted, and with this interpretation is joined the monstrous idea that there is here a reference to an intermarriage between evil angels and the daughters

of men, and that both Peter and Jude refer to the narrative given in Gen. vi. 2. But the sons of God there spoken of were the Sethites, and the daughters of men were the daughters of the Cainites. Bengel, Wordsworth, and a few others refer *with these* to the false teachers spoken of in verse 8. If this interpretation should be accepted, which seems however to be forced, then the thought is, that the sins of the four cities of the plain were of the same character as those of these false teachers. **And gone after strange flesh.** The reference is to the abominable sins of the Sodomites. **Are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire.** This translation is to be preferred to that of the margin of the R. V., *set forth as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment*, although there is not much difference in thought. The fire by which these cities were destroyed is a figure of eternal fire. Their destruction is set forth as an example of that punishment which awaits the ungodly, and which is everlasting. The Dead Sea is to this day a testimony of their punishment. The thought is well expressed by WORDSWORTH: "As Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the vengeance of a *fire* that consumed them finally, so that that they will never be restored, so the bodies and souls of the wicked will suffer, as long as they are capable of suffering; which, since they are immortal, will be *forever*." (On the doctrine of Everlasting Punishment, see pp. 165, 187-191.)

#### 4. DESCRIPTION OF THE SIN OF THESE FALSE TEACHERS.

8-16. Yet in like manner these also in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgement, but said, The Lord

rebuke thee. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not : and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed. Woe unto them ! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves ; clouds without water, carried along by winds ; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame ; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever. And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgement upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*), shewing respect of persons for the sake of advantage.

**8. Yet in like manner these also.** In spite of these examples of judgment and punishment, these false teachers of verse 4 actually commit the same abominable sins as did the Sodomites. **In their dreamings.** These men are not in their sober mind, their soul is controlled and dominated by their sensual lusts,—they are as in a dream, deaf to the truths and warnings of the Word of God. **Defile the flesh.** With the filthy lusts, into which they are led by the denial of Christ as their Lord and Master (verse 4). **And set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities** (*glories*). Sensuality and lawlessness are joined together in the same manner by Peter (2 Pet. ii. 10). They despise not only their “Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (verse 4), but every form of authority, human and divine. They even went so far as to revile the *dignities* or *glories* that surround the throne of God, i. e. the good angels, who are the agents of God in the government of the world, and the ministering servants of the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 10, 11.)

**9. But Michael the archangel.** As Gabriel, in Script-

ure, represents the ministration of the good angels towards man (Dan. viii. 13; ix. 21; Luke i. 19, 26), so Michael is the leader of the good angels in their conflict with the power of Satan (Dan. x. 13, 21; *here* and Rev. xii. 7). In the O. T., Michael is the guardian of the Jewish people in their conflict with heathenism, and in the N. T. he is represented as fighting against Satan and his angels (Rev. xii. 7-9). The word *archangel* is found only in 1 Thess. iv. 16 and *here*. Scripture knows of only one archangel, that is, Michael. **When, contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses.** Jude takes it for granted that his readers are familiar with the Jewish tradition concerning the burial of Moses, connected with Deut. xxxiv. 6, where we read how that the Lord buried his servant Moses, and that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." It is evident that Jude here refers to what took place at the time of the burial of Moses. The Targum of Jonathan attributes his burial to the archangel Michael, as the guardian of Israel. Later traditions set forth how Satan disputed such honorable burial, claiming for himself the dead body because of the blood of the Egyptian (Ex. ii. 12), which was on Moses' hands. Some, like Hofmann, Schmid, Luthardt, and others, explain the conflict as consisting in Michael not permitting the Devil to exercise his power over the dead body of Moses, but that he withdrew it from corruption, and Keil, referring to the account of the transfiguration of Jesus, quotes Kurtz with approval, when the latter suggests that God "imparted a power to the body of Moses which preserved it from corruption, and prepared the way for it to pass into the same form of existence to which Enoch and Elijah were taken, without either death or burial." FROMMUELLER: "Jude, like Paul in 2 Tim. iii. 8, probably drew from this tra-

dition, the Spirit of God directing him to extract the truth from these traditions. It is therefore not necessary to assume a special revelation vouchsafed to Jude." There is no reason for supposing that Jude here refers to the Apocryphal Book entitled "The Assumption of Moses," for both Jude and the writer of this Apocryphal Book evidently made use of the same Jewish tradition. (See *Excursus* I.) **Durst not bring against him a railing judgement, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.** These false teachers in their blasphemy (verse 8) railed against *dignities* or good angels in such a defiant way, which even Michael the archangel did not venture to do against the prince of the evil angels, when he withstood him. HUTHER: "Instead of pronouncing a judgment himself, he left this to God." This narrative of Jude need not surprise us by its strangeness even if it is not recorded in the O. T. We have a somewhat similar scene recorded in the vision of Zachariah (iii. 1-3), where Satan appears as the adversary of the high priest Joshua.

**10. But these rail at whatsoever things they know not.** These false teachers revile the *dignities* and *glories* spoken of in verse 8, including the whole realm of invisible and heavenly things. There is a bald materialism which knows nothing of an infinite world of heavenly spirits. **And what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed (*corrupted*).** They give way to their sensual appetites like beasts, and corrupt and destroy themselves by their immoderate indulgences. (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 12.)

**11. Woe unto them.** A denunciation expressing strong disapproval and conveying the threat of punishment. Frequent in the discourses of Jesus, but only here used by an Apostle. Paul says, "Woe is unto me, If I

preach not the Gospel " (1 Cor. ix. 16). **For they went in the way of Cain.** Jude prophetically sees the threatened judgment already come upon them, as if their wicked life was already ended. Just as Cain, these false teachers " acted upon mere natural instincts, on the selfish impulses of nature, in contempt of the warnings of God in conscience and in His Word " (FRONMUELLER). **And ran riotously in** (*cast themselves away through*) **the error of Balaam for hire.** (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 15.) They gave themselves up with all their might to " a vicious life averted from the truth " (HUTHER), for the sake of earthly advantage. Covetousness was their besetting sin, as it was also in the case of Balaam. **And perished in the gainsaying of Korah.** Just as Korah and those with him perished (Num. xvi. 20-35) because they resisted God and His ordinances, so certain destruction shall overtake these false teachers who are actuated by the same spirit of resistance. We may trace a double gradation, (1) *way, error, gainsaying*, and (2) in the matter of *Cain, Balaam, and Korah*, the last named having reached the highest point of wickedness. Huther calls our attention to the fact that the opposition in the case of Cain was the result of *envy*, in that of Balaam, of *covetousness*, and in that of Korah, of *pride*.

12. **These are they who are hidden rocks** (*spots*) **in your love feasts when they feast with you.** (Compare notes on 2 Pet. ii. 13.) It is difficult to decide whether we should translate *hidden rocks* or *spots* as in 2 Peter. The original Greek words used by Peter and Jude are closely related. The thought is about the same. By their conduct they destroyed the sacred character of these love feasts. **Shepherds that without fear feed themselves.** Jude is evidently referring to Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 8, " Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed them-



selves." It is best, with the Revisers, to connect *without fear* with *feed themselves*, instead of with *feast with you* as do many moderns. These false teachers were not true shepherds. (See notes on 1 Pet. v. 2.) **Clouds without water, carried along by winds.** This figure describes the internal emptiness and deceptive ostentation of these men (HUTHER), as well as their want of stability in the truth. (See 2 Pet. ii. 17.) **Autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.** In this figure the unfruitfulness and the complete deadness of these men are described. There is no hope for their salvation whatever, "they are not only fruitless, but actually dead and dried up" (HUTHER), incapable of producing any fruit in the future, "rooted out of the soil of grace" (HOFMANN).

13. **Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame** (*shames*). Jude no doubt has in mind Isa. lvii. 20, "but the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt." "The figure describes their passionate conduct against divinely-ordered barriers, their inward impurity and hurtfulness" (FRONMUELLER). **Wandering stars.** These wicked men are like comets, which quickly come and suddenly vanish. **For whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.** This describes the fearful end of these false teachers. (See notes on 2 Pet. ii. 17.)

14. **And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying.** Jude now confirms the threatenings against these false teachers by a prophecy of Enoch. In Gen. v. 24 we read "Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." In Heb. xi. 5, it is said, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God."

Some see in this statement of Jude, that Enoch was *the seventh* from Adam, a secret or mystical meaning. It is probably best to regard it as referring to the sacred number *seven*, and with Westcott (following Augustine) to say that "the number is probably noticed as conveying the idea of completion and rest." According to Jewish tradition Enoch was a prophet, and these Biblical notices of Enoch have been a fruitful source of speculation in later times. WESTCOTT: "Both the Latin and Greek Fathers commonly coupled Enoch and Elijah as historic witnesses of the possibility of a resurrection of the body and of a true human existence in glory, and the voice of early ecclesiastical tradition is almost unanimous in regarding them as *the two witnesses* (Rev. xi. 3-13) who should fall before *the beast*, and afterwards be raised to heaven before the great judgment." **Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones** (*his holy myriads*). In a vision Enoch sees the end of the world. MENKEN (quoted by Fronmueller): "To Adam, the first, was revealed and promised the appearance and advent of the Lord, as a Helper and Saviour; to Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was revealed the last advent of the same Lord, Helper and Saviour, as Judge and Avenger, and he was the first prophet, who spoke and taught this among men." These *holy ones* are the myriads of holy angels. (Compare Deut. xxxiii. 2; Zech. xiv. 5; Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. v. 11, 15.) **To execute judgement upon all.** Because the Father has given authority to the Son to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

**15. And to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.** We could not possibly have a stronger description of ungodliness. Judgment will most

surely overtake these ungodly sinners. There are many commentators who maintain that Jude here quotes the Apocryphal Book of Enoch,<sup>1</sup> but there is no positive evidence for this, for although there is a close similarity between this statement of Jude and one short passage in the first part of the Book of Enoch, there is also a remarkable difference, especially in Jude's reiterated use of the word *ungodly* as noun, adjective, verb, and adverb. It is far more likely that both the writer of the Book of Enoch and Jude made use of the same Jewish tradition.<sup>2</sup> And Fronmueller correctly remarks: "Jude must at all events have known the tradition of Enoch's prophecy, and have regarded it true as to its kernel."

16. **These are murmurers.** We have now a further description of these false teachers. **Complainers.** That is, *dissatisfied with their lot*. This is a more precise statement defining the nature of their *murmuring*. Both words occur only here in the Greek N. T. **Walking after their lusts.** The same expression occurs 2 Pet. iii. 3. **And their mouth speaketh great swelling words.** With boastful and impudent words they exalt themselves before man and God. **Shewing respect of persons for the**

<sup>1</sup> Gloag represents the view of these scholars when he says: "The conclusion appears to be almost unavoidable, that Jude quoted from this Book of Enoch. In doing so he imparted no authority to the book itself, but merely quotes it for the sake of illustration, as Paul quoted the heathen poets, Epimenides, Aratus, and Menander." Gloag discusses the whole subject very fully in his *Introduction to the Catholic Epistles*, pp. 386-408.

<sup>2</sup> PLUMPTRE: "St. Jude's reference to the prophecy of Enoch does not necessarily prove that he was acquainted with the book, but it at least shows the existence of traditions that had gathered round the patriarch's name. . . . As regards the contents of the Book of Enoch, it is a sufficiently strange farrago. . . . The Book of Enoch stands on a far lower level even than the Second Book of Esdras, and belongs to the class of writings in which the decay of Judaism was but too prolific, on which St. Paul seems to pass a final sentence when he speaks of them as 'old wives' fables' (1 Tim. iv. 7)."

**sake of advantage.** *They render admiration* and shew partiality for the sake of gain. HUTHER: "Proud boasting and cringing flattery form indeed a contrast, but yet are united together."

## 5. FINAL EXHORTATIONS TO HIS READERS.

17-23. But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have mercy, who are in doubt ; and some save, snatching them out of the fire ; and on some have mercy with fear ; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

**17. But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (See notes on 2 Pet. iii. 2.) The persons to whom Jude writes had received the Gospel message from the mouth of some of the Apostles themselves. This warning had not only been *spoken before*, but it was a prophecy, which now had already received a partial fulfilment.

**18. How that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts.** The Greek reads *their own lusts of ungodliness*. (See notes on 2 Pet. iii. 3.) This verse shows that 2 Peter was written before Jude wrote his Epistle. Paul also predicts the entrance of false teachers and ungodly men into the Church (Acts xx. 29, 30 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1 ; 2 Tim. iii. 1-5).

**19. These are they who make separations.** They cause divisions and factions in the Church. **Sensual, having not the Spirit.** The Greek word for *sensual* is *psychical*, i. e. *natural, animal*,—the earthly life rules in

them, they are without the Holy Spirit, and have no communion whatever with Christ and His Church. Their natural soul and spirit is completely under the control of the flesh. (See notes on James iii. 15.)

20. **But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.** They are to build themselves up on the objective contents of faith which has been delivered to them, and which they believe, so that this faith and belief is "the foundation which supports their whole personal life, the soul of all their thinking, willing, and doing" (WIESINGER). (Compare I Cor. iii. 10-12.) Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which we build, and into which we must ever root ourselves deeper and deeper. **Praying in the Holy Spirit.** We must pray rightly, so that the Holy Spirit is the moving and guiding power. (Compare Eph. vi. 18, "Praying at all seasons in the Spirit.")

21. **Keep yourselves in the love of God.** That is, in God's love to us. This can best be done by a continual drawing near to God by *praying in the Holy Spirit*, and by keeping God's commandments (John xv. 9, 10). **Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.** The reference is to the mercy which Christ will show to His saints at His Second Coming. Note the prominence here given to the three Persons of the Trinity, "the Holy Spirit," "God," and "Jesus Christ."

22. **And on some have mercy.** The Greek text in this verse and the next is somewhat uncertain. Some ancient MSS. read here *and some reprove*. The exhortations of these verses refer to the manner in which the faithful members of the Church are to conduct themselves towards three classes of those who have been misled by these false teachers. **Who are in doubt.** One word in Greek, difficult to interpret. Some would translate as in

A. V., *making a difference*, i. e. treating some severely, and others mildly. But the verb means either *to doubt* as in text of R. V., or *to contend* or *to dispute* as in margin of R. V. In either of the last two translations the reference is evidently to those who are troubled in the intellect,—in whose case *unbelief* has gained the ascendancy. With such pursue a *merciful* way in pleading with them, or in *reproving*.

23. **And some save, snatching them out of the fire.** The second class is in a more dangerous condition than even the first,—for they are in great danger of being utterly lost. Such they are to save, snatching them as it were from eternal fire (verse 7). **And on some have mercy with fear.** Your compassion must be united with a godly fear lest ye suffer injury yourselves, by coming in contact with the licentious surroundings into which these have been ensnared. **Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.** Have nothing whatever to do with even “the outer habits of life that are affected by the inner foulness of the soul that is in bondage to the flesh, just as men would loathe the touch of a defiled garment, bearing the stains of a cancerous ulcer” (PLUMPTRE).

## 6. CONCLUSION AND DOXOLOGY.

24, 25. Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be* glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.

24. **Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling.** Compare the beginning of the doxology in Rom. xvi. 25. For God is faithful and will guard the believer from the evil one (2 Thess. iii. 3). (See notes on 2 Pet. i. 10.) **And to set you before the presence of his**

**glory.** As manifested at the day of judgment. **Without blemish.** (Compare Eph. i. 4 ; v. 27 ; Col. i. 22 ; 1 Thess. iii. 13.) Without the stain of sin. **In exceeding joy.** For believers shall rejoice with exceeding joy at the revelation of Christ's glory (1 Pet. iv. 13).

25. **To the only God our Saviour.** The epithet *only* God is applied to God the Father in John v. 44, and 1 Tim. i. 17. In John xvii. 3, it is *the only true God* ; in Rom. xvi. 27, *the only wise God*. The Father is also called Saviour in 1 Tim. i. 1 ; ii. 3 ; iv. 10 ; Tit. i. 3 ; ii. 10 ; iii. 4. The Father is called *our Saviour* because He has instituted the means for saving and blessing us through Christ. This is expressed by the statement immediately following, **through Jesus Christ our Lord**. This is especially directed against those who did not acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and the Mediator between God and man. **Be glory, majesty, dominion and power.** *Glory* and *dominion* are found also in the doxology given in 1 Pet. iv. 11. **Before all time, and now, and for evermore (unto all the ages).** *Amen*. The liturgical formula closing the *Gloria Patri* "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end," is evidently based upon this doxology.

#### COLLECT.

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the Spirit to think and do always such things as are right ; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will ; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *Amen*.

## EXCURSUS I.

*The Assumption of Moses.* Origen (*d.* 254 A. D.) expresses it as his opinion that Jude here refers to an apocryphal book "The Assumption of Moses," and this work is occasionally referred to by the Greek Fathers down to the tenth century. For nearly nine hundred years this work was lost, and until recently was simply referred to as a book of whose character and nature we were entirely ignorant. In 1861 about one half of the book was discovered by Ceriani, the librarian of the Ambrosian library at Milan, among manuscripts taken from the monastery of Bobbio, near Pavia (the Muratorian Canon had also originally belonged to Columban's great monastery at Bobbio). The manuscript (a palimpsest) is evidently of the sixth century, and contained also a considerable fragment of the Book of Jubilees. It is in Latin, but this is a translation from the Greek. Some, like Ewald, Merx, Dillmann, and others, think it was originally written in Aramaic; others, like Mangold, Hilgenfeld, and Drummond, regard the Greek as the original. The fragment which we possess is divided into two parts, (1) the prophetic address of Moses to Joshua his successor (i-xv), and (2) the answer of Joshua with the encouraging reply of Moses (xvi-xix). Ewald, Dillmann, Wieseler, and Schuerer, think the book was written about 6 A. D.; Hilgenfeld, Mangold, Merx, Davidson, and others, place it between 44 and 64 A. D.; Hausrath fixes on the reign of Domitian; Volkmar



decides on 137 or 138 A. D., and F. Philippi supposes the book to have been written during the second century A. D. DEANE, who has given us the fullest discussion in English on this subject (*Monthly Interpreter*, March, 1885, pp. 321-348), says: "Too much stress must not be laid upon the supposed quotation from The Assumption, as the passage referred to is not extant, and both Jude and Pseudo-Moses may have used some tradition current among the Jews of the period." (See also Schuerer, *History of the Jewish People in the time of Christ*, vol. 5, pp. 73-83; Gloag, *Introduction to Catholic Epistles*, pp. 373-386.

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